

# BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER 124

AUGUST 1993

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## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Welcome, I hope you enjoy your newsletter! Already in 1993/4 we have had two outings, the John Pinkerton boat trip and the visit to Avebury and the excavations at Chisenbury. Congratulations to Richard Dexter, Tim Herrington and Mary Oliver for their organisation. The weather was reasonably kind, too !

History - the story of Man's progress - is fascinating. To share the interest with others in our Society is, to me, a pleasure heightened. I know that your recently elected committee members are anxious to build on what we have already achieved. Our objective remains to investigate the history and pre-history of our area and to stimulate interest in archaeological studies generally. We can also re-state our wish to avoid duplicating activities well catered for elsewhere. We aim to be the very best at what we do and play a pro-active role in the local community - to contribute to the public life of the Borough. Of course, we need to strike a balance between the academic and making our experience more accessible for all age groups. I see us as part missionaries, part explorers looking for knowledge, but always ensuring that it is a pleasant and enjoyable experience.

Among future activities we are looking for a stepped increase in our field work. Richard is currently heading our liaison with the National Trust at the Vyne. You may have a special interest you would like to explore. One of mine would be a series of short village historical studies. Please let me know if there is something that you want to 'get your teeth into'. So, *steady improvement* will be our watchword, which rather sounds like the words of Samuel Smiles, that eminent Victorian of "Self Help" fame.

Our members, you, give us our strength with all your varied interests and talents. But we need to increase our membership if we are to sustain a full range of activities, as, for each of these, we require a pool of willing volunteers. A personal recommendation is the best way of introducing new members. We ask you, if you can, to make such a contribution to your Society.

Looking forward to an enjoyable season and to seeing you all soon.

J G Horrocks

## MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS AND CARDS

Nearly one half of the 1992/3 membership has been renewed to date - if you are not yet a member of this select band, please fill in the form we sent you with the last Newsletter (No 123) and return it as soon as possible. If you have mislaid the form, just send in your subscription to **Tim Herrington, 16, Scotney Road, Basingstoke, RG21 2SR,**  
The fees are £7.50 for ordinary membership, £10 family membership or £4.00 concessionary.

Paid-up members will receive a membership card for 1993/4 with this newsletter, together with the 1993/4 programme card. Further copies of the card are available to give to prospective new members; they should be found in local libraries and the museum, too. Please ask Tim if you would like extra copies for your friends !

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## HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT OF THE 1993 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's AGM on June 10th happily attracted some 41 members. The retiring Chairman, Richard Dexter, thanked his committee for their continuing support and presented flowers to a delighted Hon.Sec.! The Treasurer's report showed the finances to be in a healthy state but warned that the continuing rise in expenses for room hire, newsletters etc., must inevitably lead to higher subscription rates. It is fortunate that the majority of our guest speakers do not press for fees or expenses. The Video "Beneath Basingstoke" is being marketed by Queen Mary's Centre and about 230 have been sold so far. Copies are to be found in such far-flung places as Australia, Canada, Nigeria and the Isle of Wight!

The business meeting concluded with Mary Oliver giving a vote of thanks to the retiring Chairman. At this point, a new member, Mr Feuillade, asked that it be put on record how much he had enjoyed the interesting and varied programme presented by the Society this year.

The illustrated talk by Alec Tilley "The Alternative Trireme" as a follow-up to Tom Hassall's talk in March was a great success and provoked much animated discussion. The jury is still out !!

The election of Officers and Committee resulted in the following :-

### The New Committee Members, June 1993

Chairman: John Horrocks, 5, Oak Close, Oakley, Basingstoke  
Tel:780537

Secretary: Barbara Herrington, 16, Scotney Road, Basingstoke  
Tel:22090

Treasurer: Jean Donohoe, 10, Curlew Close, Kempshott, B'stoke  
Tel:464799

Committee: Marta Cock, 16, Soper Grove, Basingstoke  
Tel:51506

Les Fitzgerald, 10, Warbleton Road, Chineham, B/S  
Tel:812557

Nicola Hawes, 28, Augustus Drive, Basingstoke  
Tel:461844

Kathy Haworth, 5A, Hill Road, Oakley, Basingstoke  
Tel:780549

David Miles, 10, Lunds Farm Rd., Woodley, Reading  
Tel: 0734 691905

Mary Oliver, 3, Milkingpen Lane, Old Basing, B/S  
Tel:24263

#### **Committee Responsibilities**

Mary -	Programme Organiser
Leslie -	Meetings Manager
Nicola -	Catering Liaison
Marta -	Publicity
David -	Library
Kathy -	Welcome visitors/new members; publicity
* Barbara A. -	Newsletter Editor
* Tim -	Membership & Publicity

\* Co-opted to Committee

**In addition**, Martin Morris has agreed to continue to liaise with the CBA for the Society. A number of members will be concerned with fieldwork projects, including Peggy Drury, Mary Oliver, Nicola Hawes, Kathy Haworth, David Miles, Peter Heath, Richard Dexter and Steven Strongman.

**THE SEPTEMBER LECTURE - Thursday, September 9th, 7.30 pm**

**Wessex Place Names** by John Swannell

This is the talk which was postponed from last year's programme. Please note that it will take place in the **Coffee Room adjacent to the Main Hall at Queen Mary's College** not in the Centre Conference Room. John Swannell has taught for some years at Southampton University. He has a special interest in Place Names and will try to unravel some of our queries, too!

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**THE OCTOBER MEETING - Thursday, October 14th, 7.30 pm at Sun Life of Canada,  
Basing View, Basingstoke**

We have been invited to share in the centenary celebrations of Sun Life of Canada (SLC) by holding our October meeting at their Basing View headquarters. The Mayor will be attending, and, together with the SLC Vice President, our Chairman and invited guests, will view a photographic exhibition of 19th C Basingstoke mounted by the Willis Museum from their collection. Then there will be an illustrated talk "The Rise & Demise of the Blue Coat School in Basingstoke" to be given by Peter Davis & Bill Fergie. Finally, refreshments will be offered by SLC. Contributions will be invited towards a charity to be nominated by BAHS in conjunction with SLC.

Please reply as soon as possible on the enclosed slip so that we can liaise with SLC over arrangements for the evening.

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**THE FAMILY FESTIVAL September 12th** at Queen Mary's College

At this event, our Society will be displaying a small exhibition on the making of our Video and will be showing this during the day. It is not necessary to book in advance to visit the event. Details are available from Queen Mary's Centre office. There is an admission charge.

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**SEMINAR September 25th** in the Conference Room at Queen Mary's Centre.

The County Archaeologist, Mike Hughes, is calling this ½ day seminar, starting at 10.30 am, to bring interested local societies together to put across the work of the Hampshire County Planning Department and to promote liaison between societies for the future. Any member with a special interest in this seminar should contact Barbara Herrington (0256) 22090 to book a place.

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### **BENEATH BASINGSTOKE - Evening course**

Queen Mary's Centre have invited Mary Oliver to give a series of 10 evening lectures at the Centre, on the archaeology of the Basingstoke region. She describes this as a "non-academic general-interest" series, covering sites mentioned on the video, and others, in a rather different way. These will be on Wednesday evenings, from 7 to 9 pm, starting on 27th September.

### **GCSE ARCHAEOLOGY - Evening course**

It is hoped that this course will run again at BCOT (The Basingstoke College of Technology), given by Mary Oliver and Theresa Hook. Enrolment has already started, closing on 2nd September. The course will start on Monday, 13th September (6.30 - 9 pm) and costs £83. Several of our members can recommend this course, having successfully passed the exam at the end!

### **FIELDWORK - advance warning**

We are about to enter a more active phase, with plans for surveying, field walking and maybe some digging. David Miles (phone 0734 691905) is collecting names and phone numbers of those interested, so that they can be contacted quickly when details are known.

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### **CORSETS AND COMFORT**

Has anyone got any corsets in good enough condition to lend for demonstration on a one day course at Southampton University on October 2nd? Though I am interested in any kind of corset I would particularly like old ones, the older the better. I promise good care will be taken of them.

If you would rather not lend them I am still interested in seeing them and making drawings — which will show how they are made. Anyone interested in attending the course should contact Southampton University on 0703 593469.

If you can help, please contact me on Basingstoke 51506.

Marta Cock.

## **BASINGSTOKE RACES**

by Andrew Duckworth

Sarah found this gem of an advertisement in The Reading Mercury for 1786:

### **"BASINGSTOKE RACES, 1786**

On Thursday, 29th June will be run for on Basingstoke Down, Fifty pounds for any four year old horse, etc., that never won Fifty pounds (matches and sweepstakes excepted), colts 8 stone 3 pounds, fillies 8 stone, the best of three heats, two miles and a distance to a heat. To start at the distance chair.

Same day a sub. of Ten Guineas each for Hunters carrying 13 stone: to be rode by Gentlemen, three heats, two miles and a distance to a heat: to start at the distance chair. No horse to be run that ever run anything (matches and sweepstakes excepted) but has been actually used as a hunter in the last season, and not only to get the name, but really as a hunter. The horses to be named to Mr. Caston, Clerk of the Course at Basingstoke, on or before 22nd of June, and the money to be paid to him before starting or the subscription to be doubled.

On Friday the 30th, Fifty pounds, for five, six years old, and aged horses, etc. that never won Fifty pounds, five years old, 8 st. 10 lbs, six years old, 9 st. 3 lbs, and aged, 9 st. 7 lbs. The best of three four mile heats. Certificates of age and qualification of each horse, etc., entering for the above plates, to be produced at the time of entrance.

To be shown and entered at the Crown Inn, Basingstoke, on Thursday, the 22nd June, between the hours of four and eight in the afternoon, and to run and be governed by the articles which shall then and there be produced. The owner of every horse, etc., to pay one guinea entrance, half a guinea to the clerk, and subscribe two guineas towards the gates: or to pay two guineas entrance at the post, one guinea to the clerk and subscribe two guineas towards the plates.

The stakes each day to go to the second best horse. Every horse, etc., entering for the plate to stand at the house of a subscriber of one guinea from the day of entrance to the day of running, and to be plated by a subscribing Smith (of half a guinea) of the town of Basingstoke and no other.

No less than three reported running horses to stand for each plate, and, if only one enters, the owner shall have ten guineas, fifteen guineas between them, and their entrance money returned.

To start each day at five o'clock.

No crossing or jostling, nothing but fair running will be allowed.

Any dispute which may arise about entering, riding or running shall be determined by the Steward, or whom he shall appoint, and that determination shall be final.

No person to erect a booth, or sell liquors, on the course without paying one guinea towards the plates one clear week before the races: and if any person shall erect a booth on another's ground it will be pulled down.

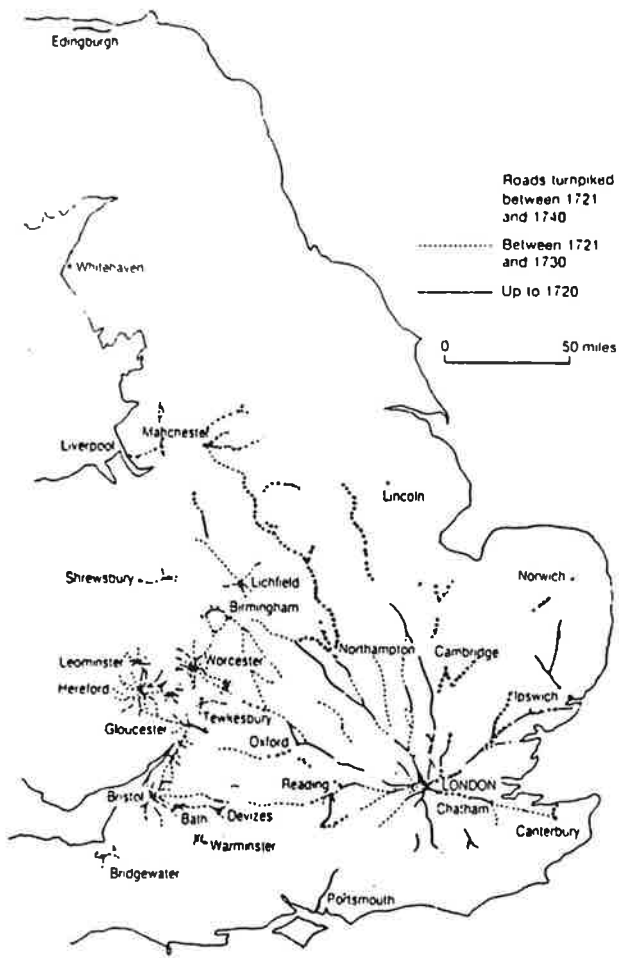


Fig. 2(a) The turnpike road network in 1740

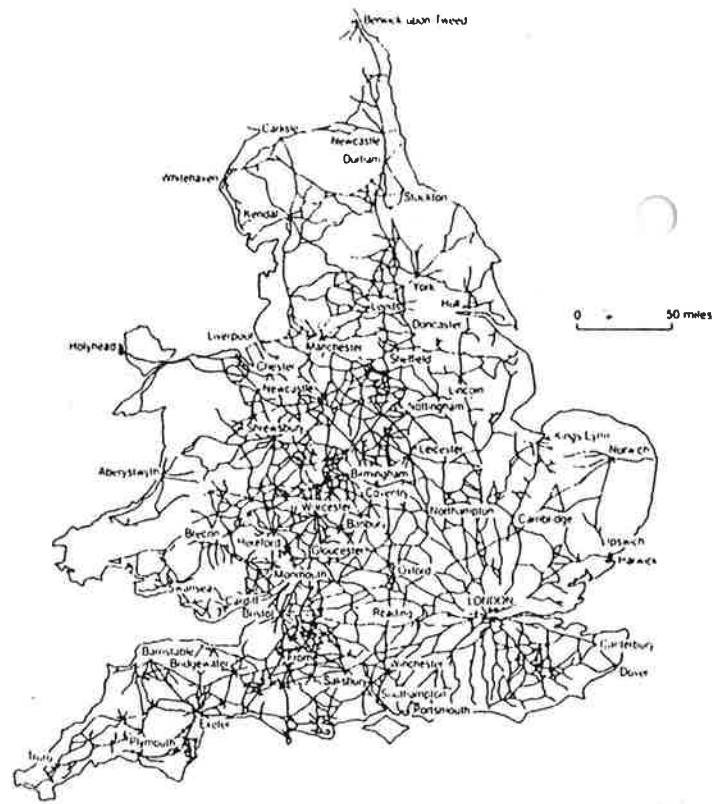


Fig. 2(c) The turnpike road network in 1770

Source: E. Pawson, *Transport and Economy: The Turnpike Roads in Eighteenth Century Britain* (London, 1977), pp. 137, 139, 140

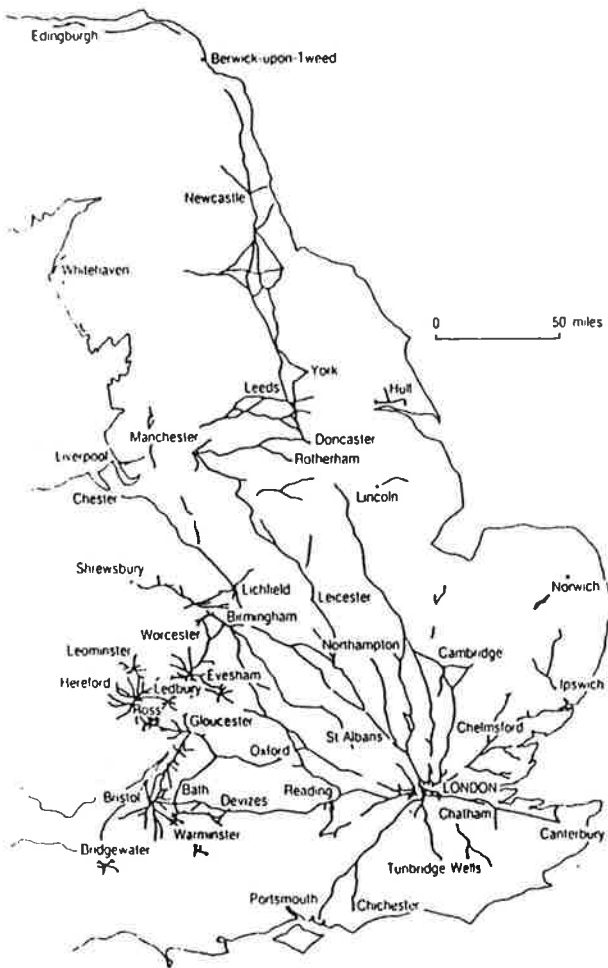
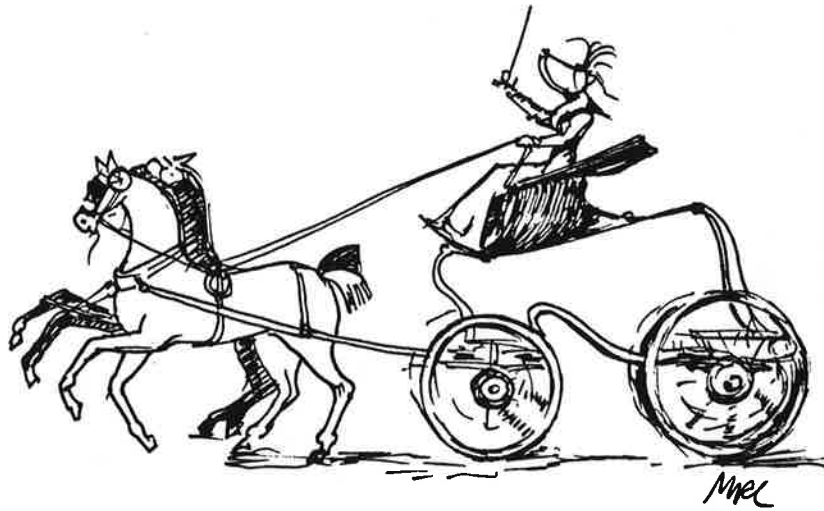
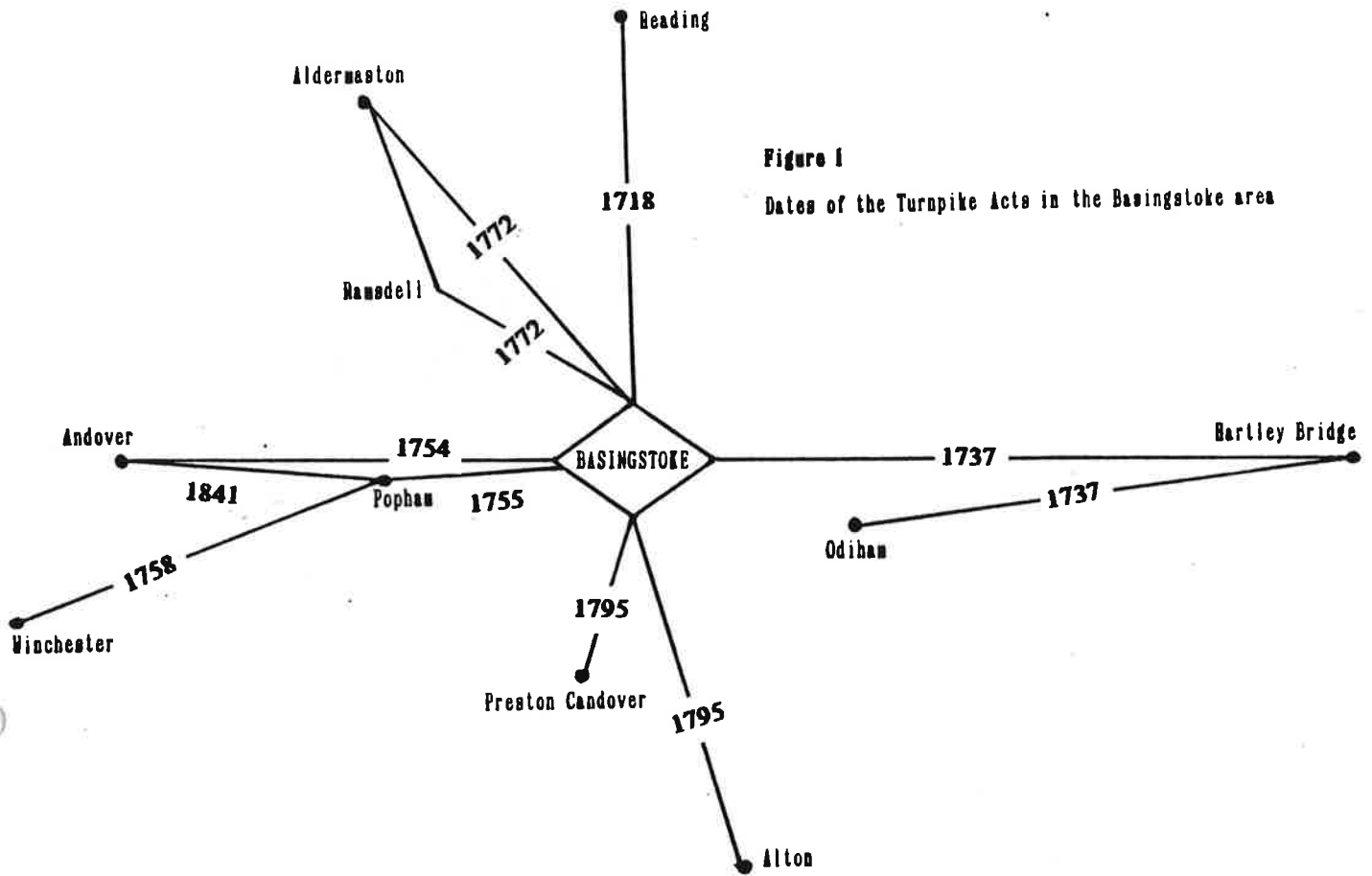
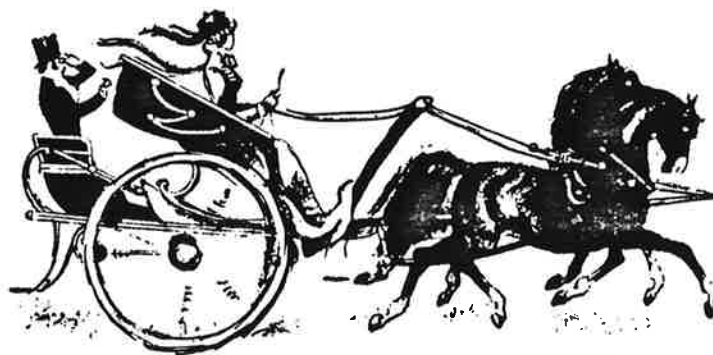


Fig. 2(b) The turnpike road network in 1750





**Figure 7**      *A HIGH PERCH PHAETON*



**Figure 8**      *A CURRICLE*



Figure 5

FOUR IN HAND DRAG



Figure 3 A Regency Dandy in driving gear



Figure 4

LANDAU (open)

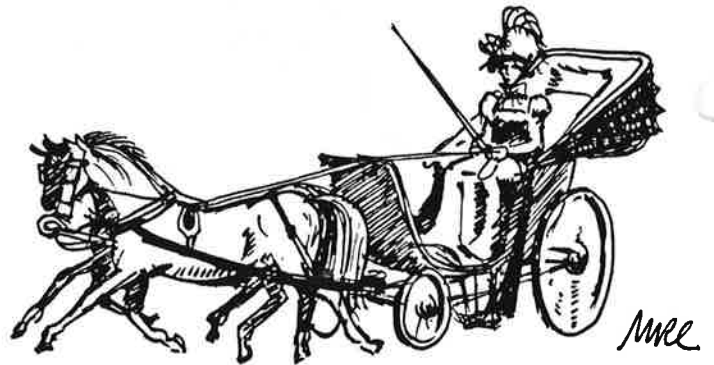


Figure 6

A PHAETON

An ordinary the first day of the races at the Maidenhead Inn, Basingstoke, and a ball the same evening at the Town Hall, and an ordinary the second day at the Crown.

W. J. Chute, Esq., Steward. "

It is worth quoting in full, for it describes an important social event for the town, attracting not only the gentlemen from the great houses in the area, and the tenant farmers, but also the townspeople, who would have enjoyed the ordinaries at the Maidenhead and the Crown Inns; with the Aldermen, Councillors and other prosperous citizens looking forward to the Ball at the Town Hall. (An ordinary was a social gathering at which a meal at a fixed price was provided, with, no doubt, ample supplies of the local ale.) The race course, on Basingstoke Down, was on the area now mostly taken up by Stratton Park between Pack Lane and Buckskin Lane, and the races were obviously well organised and stewarded.

It is not easy now to imagine the number of horses stabled and pastured in the Basingstoke area at that time. 1786 is a little early in the coaching age, but in 1784 the Post Office had entered the scene with their own coaches, and by then Basingstoke was an important stage on the two main routes to the West Country. By 1828, 37 coaches a day changed horses in the town. Stabling had to be provided for several hundred horses for this traffic alone: the river meadows of the Loddon were used as grazing grounds, and grazing areas as far south as Lasham were owned by the Corporation, and by private contractors, such as the Curtis family, who owned the Angel Inn.

The atmosphere of the town at this time would have been busy, noisy and prosperous, for the coaching activities provided many regular jobs for the townspeople. For the farmer the horse was essential, not only to work the farm and haul his wagons, but also as a means of travel. Every great house had its coaches, phaetons, landaus, governess carts and chaises, and their stables must have been humming with activity. Even the clergymen, the prosperous shopkeepers, the doctors and the solicitors owned their own horses. The sounds of the farrier rang out all day in town and village. Great wagons lumbered from town to town, carrying goods, with the poorer people as passengers. The horse made the movement of men and agricultural products possible across the land, and contributed greatly to the growing prosperity of Britain in the 18th century.

Social activity of the kind represented by this advertisement sometimes gives the reader a clue to changes in patterns of living across the country as a whole. So one race meeting, not unique to Basingstoke, may represent a fashion of the time.

The extensive development of the turnpike road network between 1740 and 1770 as shown on Figure 1, revolutionised travel in that short period of 30 years. (It is interesting that this growth in greatly improved road surfaces took place more extensively and more rapidly than did the development of the Motorway system since the opening of the M1 in the 1950s - Figure 2 a, b, c). In 1740 it took Thomas Pennant six days to travel from Chester to London: in 1780 it took him two days. Suddenly that hardy race of gentlemen who travelled on horseback, unrecognisable in their heavy frock-coats, trousers and jack-boots, covered in dust and mud after a hard day's ride, had almost vanished. Replacing them were a new, wild, somewhat effeminate breed of dandies for whom driving in a light chaise was a recreation, and travel by horseback took second place (Figure 3).

Racing and record-breaking by fast curricles pulled by racing horses (Figure 8) became a regular feature in the leisure life of these young bloods. With time and money to burn, they enjoyed the sense of speed and the opportunity to wager on the results of such contests. The turnpikes also made it easy to reach racecourses near the big towns, and it is no accident that the first running of the Derby and the Oaks at Epsom was in 1780 and 1779 respectively, and the St Leger in 1776, very much in the spirit of the time.

As were Basingstoke races in 1786. What could be more attractive than the open down on a fine Summer's day, with farm wagons filled with servants from the big houses, straw bales as grandstands, flags marking the course fluttering in the breeze, swarthy Romanies moving through the more sober townspeople who had walked the three miles out of the town to enjoy the races, soldiers standing in groups in their bright uniforms, with the booths selling food and ale doing a brisk trade? Perhaps with a drum and fife band playing the marching tunes of the day.

The Biggs-Withers and the Lefroys, the Chutes and Barings would be there in their smart phaetons (Figure 6 and 7) and landaus (Figure 4) and a four-horse-drag or two (Figure 5) would have brought country people from the Candover villages. Is it too much a stretch of the imagination if one senses a stir in the crowd as they hear approaching over the open down from the top of Kempshott Hill the smart curricles and riders of the Prince of Wales and his court, with his mistress Mrs Robinson, in their fine London clothes, coming to wager among themselves on the results of the day's racing?

To complete the picture, above all the bustle of the crowd would be the endless sound of the larks, disturbed from their nests in the long grasses of the downs by the movement and noise. So the imagination takes wing from a prosaic newspaper advertisement. A historian once said that it was not enough to know how people earned their livings in past times: it was also essential to know how they enjoyed themselves. In what is to me the most interesting half-century in the history of this country, this advertisement opens a window on a Summer's day in Basingstoke in 1786.

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## **SOCIETY OUTING**

by Betty Waters

Sunday, July 18th:

8.30 a.m. Rain - oh dear!

9.15 a.m. Ah! Fine - fingers crossed!

9.30 a.m. Started a lovely run through Hungerford and Marlborough en route for Avebury. Past the Sanctuary, our first stop was for a visit to the West Kennet Long Barrow. After an explanatory chat about the barrow from Mary Oliver, we started to climb the down. In glorious sunshine the path led up through wild scabious and geraniums, more than I personally had seen for a long time. After visiting the barrow we enjoyed magnificent views across the countryside from the summit, until it was time to return to the coach (easier coming down).

Reaching Avebury, with the sun still shining, we went our several ways through this unique village. We were advised to have an early lunch at the "Red Lion" or the "Stones" restaurant if we hadn't a picnic lunch.

My companion and I, having brought a picnic, started off with a coffee at "Stones" - what was left after I'd tipped my cup down myself was delicious! We were very tempted by the salads and home-made gooey cakes, but there is so much to see in Avebury we resisted, as time was short (my halo nipped my head).

I found some books I hadn't got at the barns (didn't dare look at the National Trust ones too). An excellent exhibition of rural life at the barn, plus the museum, church, never mind the stone circles, and there was barely time to have a picnic.

As we returned to the coach it had clouded over but was still fine, and off we set for Chisenbury Warren and the dig. Another pleasant journey through country lanes, over the Wansdyke and the Kennet and Avon Canal, a right turn down a tank track, and we were there.

We were welcomed by Mike Fulford, who explained what the dig was about, with an excellent chart from aerial and magnetometer surveys. It was thought to be a Romano-British nucleated settlement. Four trenches had been dug at strategic points through the site, across what were thought to be the "High Street", a hollow lane, and house platforms.

We walked along the "village street" from trench to trench, while Mike explained what had been found. Coins, mainly from the 2nd century, sherds from several different potteries, plus limestone and old red sandstone roofing "tiles" or "slabs", also many pieces of quernstones. Although no actual walls had been found, it was thought they were probably timber and wattle; several areas of tumbled rubble indicated where footings of buildings or "garden walls" had been. It was a most interesting tour of the site.

And then, as we walked to the final trench it began to rain - so we had to have our picnic tea in the coach. Our thanks are due to Tim and Mary for arranging another very successful outing. Every year the Society manages to come up with another successful venue. We are fortunate in having such able members of our committee.

NOW for something you didn't know:

Overheard walking round the northern part of the stone circle at Avebury, three Americans were standing by one of the stones:

MR KNOW-ALL These stones were erected at the time of the Pyramids.

1ST FRIEND How do you know?

MR KNOW-ALL The shape of that piece of stone - look. It's triangular.

2ND FRIEND But how did they communicate?

MR KNOW-ALL They talked through the water wells.

No mention of languages! We daren't stay and listen further, we were laughing so much - and NO, we hadn't been drinking. You live and learn, or at least are amused.

11

