

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER 163

May 2003

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Pot-making

Mary Oliver and
Paulline Williams
display the 'Iron Age'
pots they made recently
at Viables under the
direction of Clair
Lamerton.





A FRESH START FOR TIM...

We all knew Tim Herrington doesn't waste time, but his move from Basingstoke to Horsham was ultra-fast and took many people (including him?) by surprise. He is now happily settling into his new home, near one of his sons, but he has promised to come back to meetings, trips etc when he can.

Tim was instrumental in the formation of our Society and has been an outstanding Chairman (and before that, Secretary), organising visits, editing the Newsletter ... what will we do without him?

Warmest thanks, Tim, from all of us!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2003

We give formal notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Basingstoke Archaeological & Historical Society to be held on Thursday 12th June 2003 at 7.30 pm in Church Cottage, Church Square, Basingstoke. The AGM will be followed by a talk by Alan Turton.

AGENDA

- 1 Welcome and apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of the 2002 AGM held on 13th June 2002
- 3 Matters arising from the above minutes
- 4 Chairman's Report
- 5 Treasurer's Report and presentation of accounts
- 6 Election of Officers
- 7 Election of Auditor for 2003-4
- 8 Any other business

Since Tim Herrington's move, Marjolein Mussellwhite has kindly been standing in for him as "Trainee Chairman" and now she has herself been nominated for election as Chairman. Les Fitzgerald and Mary Shelley will not seek re-election to the Committee (our thanks to them for all their work) and nominations have been received for Graham Hayward, Diana Medley and David Score.

CLAIMING DATES

Don't forget the Society visit to the Silchester excavation,
6 pm for 6.30 at the car park, on 7th August.

We are hoping to arrange a trip to Bradford on Avon, on 23rd August. Details will be announced as soon as possible, but meanwhile please note the date.



LONG LIVE THE WILLIS MUSEUM!

As this Newsletter goes out to members, a meeting is being held for “stakeholders” to explain plans for creating a Discovery Centre in Basingstoke. When this was first announced it appeared to contain a real threat to the Willis Museum, suggesting that the Museum itself might close and that a small portion of its displays might be shoehorned into one of many ‘zones’ of this Centre in the Library; the “top of the town” would then lose its soul. The “Gazette” has received many letters deploring such a suggestion, and it is still helpful for people to write to express their support for what the Museum has done for the town over the years – and even more, what they would like it to do. Links between the Museum, the Library, Archives and whatever the Discovery Centre turns out to be can be very welcome if all this enhances rather than damages the potential of each.

Admittedly, the Museum has not long been in the old Town Hall, as it started on the upper floor of the Mechanics Institute in New Street, but its present home is a focal point where people can easily be tempted in by coffee and cakes and go on to have another word with “Roman Fred”, look at a new exhibition, or revisit some old favourites – always “discovering” something new. And it is easily accessible for school children, who are made very welcome. A recent initiative is to open the Museum on the Sunday mornings when the Farmers’ Market visits “the top of the town” – giving it a clear role in this community event.

So the position is great, even if the internal layout of the building itself causes problems. If anything, it is not big enough and although the top floor can be well used for lectures, school visits and some temporary exhibitions, the lack of air conditioning there does restrict its use.

In fact, the Museum needs to be given more resources to fulfil all its potential. Newcomers and Basingstokers alike look to the Museum to interpret the individual nature of the town, and to show how it has grown and changed through the centuries. The “Walk Back Through Time” is an amazing use of what space is available, using a surprising mixture of objects, text, photographs, sound and video to bring all this to life, but there are some important gaps in time that call out to be filled. Its “wandering” layout is very effective for the visitor, but it is a difficult area for the museum staff to watch. The Archaeology gallery gives a tantalising glimpse of what has been found here, especially during town redevelopment. When the “Beneath Basingstoke” video was running there, it did give the wider context for these finds, but it is too long for visitors to stand and watch all the way through. If funding was available it might be possible to “call up” sections relating to items on display or to where people live, letting people view the whole thing in the Resources Room if they wish.

There is so much potential, still, for the Resources Room; will the Discovery Centre do much more than the Resources Room used to do when it was properly manned? Many people used to pop in almost on the spur of the moment to find out things like the origins of the name of their road, why

the "Nine Saxons" pub had been so named – and what it really should have been called, where some old house used to be and who owned it, as well as following up bigger items of research.

We reprint below John Oliver's account of the Basingstoke Willis Museum Group and its transformation into our Society (published in Newsletter 68, 1981, and again in PAST PIECES) to remind us of the way the Museum once worked with local volunteers.

The Origins of the Basingstoke Archaeological & Historical Society John Oliver

We have to go back to the heyday of the Town re-development for the real origins of our Society, as it was then that the Willis Museum, realising that there would be archaeological and historical research to be done, firstly increased its full-time staff and then set about interesting the people of Basingstoke to help. Mary Oliver, then Mary Atkinson, was appointed to the post and, in 1964, a meeting was called to suggest ways in which help could be given to record the town that was fast disappearing, and it was agreed to form the Basingstoke Willis Museum Group.

The first meeting was typical of many that followed, and took place at Warren House, in Wote Street, a fine house lately used by a firm of solicitors and shortly to be demolished. Some people made measured drawings of certain features, others removed (or tried to remove) items of interest such as ironmongery and sections of plaster cornice. Later, the porch was removed for the Museum collection. On subsequent meetings – usually Thursday evening or Saturday – many of the buildings were visited as they became empty prior to demolition and members became adept at what was termed 'wrecking' and could reckon to take out a cast-iron fireplace in four minutes. The number and variety of the collections increased rapidly, including such things as door knockers, chimney pots, patterned tiles, ornamental stonework, wallpaper etc.

Collecting and recording buildings was not the only concern of the Group, because at the same time as the town centre was being re-developed, the new housing sites around the town were producing evidence of far earlier settlement. So, over the Whitsun holiday of 1965, a training dig was organised on the site of a barrow at Buckskin, which involved a lot of hard work cutting a trench to define the barrow but with disappointingly poor results. This did not deter members and a great deal more work, with much better results, followed at the Iron Age site on the Oakridge Estate.

During the winter months, when it was not possible to work out of doors, weekly meetings continued in the Museum gallery, washing and marking the finds, conserving some of the items from the buildings and assisting with getting the Museum records up to date.

There came a time when the majority of the demolition was complete and so the wrecking sessions came to an end. It was a matter of some concern at the time – and, in retrospect, a disaster – that the Authorities erected an 8 foot high fence around the town centre and would not give any chance for archaeological investigation in the area. The whole area was excavated to a great depth and we shall never know how much of the history of Basingstoke went in the lorries. The only thing of note to come out from behind the fence was one medieval jug! However, excavation continued at Oakridge under the direction of Mary, and then under her successor Barbara Glover [Applin]. Other sites excavated included another barrow at Buckskin, a Roman bathhouse at Oakridge and a settlement at Common Plantation.

A great change came when the Museum Service acquired new headquarters at Chilcomb House near Winchester and moved its staff there. At the same time, it decided that it could not be directly involved in archaeological excavation. The members of the Group were very concerned

because, although they still had the goodwill and help from the Museum, the Museum had ceased to provide the driving force. At this time, another site known from aerial photographs at Ructstalls Hill was about to be developed and it was hoped to investigate it more fully prior to development rather than, as had happened in the past, working amongst the building operations.

This was how the Basingstoke Archaeological Society was formed and later expanded to the Basingstoke Archaeological & Historical Society. The Museum itself, with its move to the Town Hall, incorporated much of the rescued material in the Town and Archaeology galleries, and the Resources Room drew in researchers. Although there is, unfortunately, no longer space at the Museum for doing practical work, members of our Society and other local volunteers have for some years now been taking part in the Hampshire Museum Service's dig at Basing House, and we have begun helping to sort out the Hampshire Museum Service Archaeological stores at Chilcomb House, where much of the items the Group rescued are stored. Our own BASINGSTOKE TALKING HISTORY project is run in association with the Museum, and we have contributed to exhibitions and given talks on this around the town and even nationally. Many other local groups have connections with the Museum, which recently hosted an exhibition of the work of many Local History societies – and, of course, the Friends of the Willis Museum have worked to provide funds for items the Museum could not otherwise have afforded, including various objects of local interest, computer equipment for the Resources Room and the welcome stair lifts which give access to those who cannot climb the stairs.

We look forward to hearing what the Discovery Centre really entails and what gain there can be for both the Museum and the Library, remembering that the Museum is basically about actual objects and the Library basically about books – helpful though computers, “virtual reality” and such things may be in interpreting both. Letters have concentrated on the effect on the Museum – we must also urge that, in order to make room for something new, our excellent Library should not be slimmed down beyond recognition.

SOUTHERN ORAL HISTORY EXCHANGE

This is a new body having its first OPEN FORUM on Saturday, 17th May 200d at Tudor Merchant's Hall, Westgate (off Bugle Street) Southampton (*car parking nearby and free bus from Southampton station*).

The two morning talks are by Al Thomson on “What is oral history and why do we use it?” and Barbara Applin on “Basingstoke Talking History: how we record, transcribe, research and publish our oral testimonies”. The afternoon session will provide an opportunity for those attending to talk about their own projects, to ask questions, to discuss any problems and to meet other oral historians.

Details from Ann Day, University College Chichester, College Lane, Chichester, PO19 6PE or e-mail to a.day@ucc.ac.uk

Hot News from the Dig!

**BASING HOUSE – THE GRANGE
2003 EXCAVATION
INTERIM NOTE**

*David Allen
25 April 2003*

This year the main effort is focused immediately inside the second blocked gateway. An area of 120 m² was opened, which overlapped with last year's work by two metres. One of the key objectives was to find the east end of the rectilinear building seen last year. This was soon achieved but the scant remains were even less substantial than those seen 12 months ago.

The main objective, however, was to find evidence for the "coach house" which appears to accompany the mansion on the 1730 plan. On this document, the original of which is held at the Hampshire Record Office, the building appears to have a gable end located directly on The Street. At the time of writing the clear candidate for this building – in the form of two robber trenches – is located some three metres north of The Street with a small spur wall closing the gap. The most surprising feature of this structure is a narrow internal wall which survives to a height of 20 cm above everything else. Why this wall should have been so fortunate when everything else was being robbed out below ground level remains a mystery. The building sits on a prepared surface of gravel and mortar, and it is not yet clear if this belongs to an earlier Tudor phase.

The opportunity was also taken to examine the second blocked gateway in some detail. The east gate pillar stands on a massive plinth of rough brick work and this in turn overlies the remains of another wall foundation. At the time of writing it is not apparent whether or not this belongs to a building, but it is clearly something dating from the Tudor layout, contemporary with its near neighbour, the rectilinear building.

Finds have been surprisingly few, considering that we are dealing with a substantial layer of demolition debris, but the usual array of window glass, window lead, clay pipes, glazed pottery and animal bone has come to light.

The weather, always a talking point on a Basing dig, has shown us some amazing extremes this season, from baking hot to freezing cold to dripping wet, all within the space of one week. But despite the meteorological conditions the support from the BAHS, both old hands and new/potential members, has been absolutely first class!

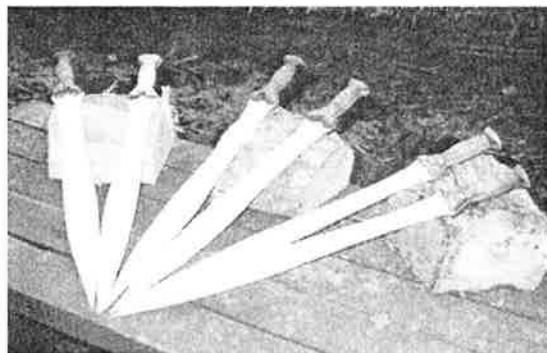
An illustrated interim report will be published shortly.

Ernie Major

We were very sorry to hear of the sudden death of Ernie Major, who was well-known to many users of the Willis Museum's Resources Room and went on to give an evening course in local history/archaeology. He was always willing to help in any search, found interesting tasks for the work-experience students assigned to his care and he delighted in making up terrible puns and jokes to attract children to the history and archaeology of Basingstoke – see his booklet, ARCHIE'S BOOK OF BASINGSTOKE. And he was the prime mover in the very fast production of the recent book MEMORIES OF BASINGSTOKE.

Sword-making

Nicola Turton



Last November, Alan and I made our first visit to Flag Fen. It was a damp and cold day, but that made it all the more atmospheric, and I found myself very drawn to the peace and timelessness of the site. I then joined the Friends Group and when the details of their workshops were sent to me, Alan and I both thought how nice it would be to do some bronze casting. So, at the beginning of February, Alan and I went to a sword-making weekend at Flag Fen.

The swords we made were copies of a Bronze Age sword, which is now in the Pitt Rivers museum. It looks for all the world like a sword from Lord of the Rings and is a very elegant leaf shape with a wooden hilt (handle). The workshop took place in one of the Iron Age circular huts at Flag Fen, and we began early on Saturday morning by watching the bronze being made. The bronze caster, Dave, used tin ingots and copper wire to make the bronze, and we were able to use a mask to peer into the furnace and watch the copper melting. Copper has a much higher melting point than tin, so tin was the last ingredient to be added.

We used a mould which Dave had carved from Cornish soapstone, and it had been heating in a kiln overnight. The stone has to be about 120°C to prepare it for the heat of the molten metal, and also to make sure there is no water. If there is a trace of moisture, the intense heat will turn it to vapour, and as the vapour has a greater volume than water, it may cause the mould to explode as there is nowhere for the water vapour to go.

As I was the only woman on the course, the others were chivalrous enough to let me have the first sword. And it was utterly thrilling to take *my* sword and quench it in the water. So romantic! Then the hard work began. The swords looked quite nice until we started to polish them, then one could see all the casting holes and marks. The first stage was to file the flats of the blades, with increasingly finer files, eventually moving onto grades of sandpaper and wire wool. The metal was surprisingly hard and unrewarding, but perhaps a metal worker would disagree with me. I found I preferred working the wood for the hilt, as the wood smells so good and was so responsive. When the two halves of the hilt were nicely finished we hit them with a hammer. Yes, that was as awful as it sounds, and several of us split the wood whilst hammering in the copper pins to hold the wood to the metal, but glue came to the rescue! The pins were placed in the same positions as on the original, so I wonder if they had similar problems.

After sanding out the hammer marks and smoothing down the heads of the pins, Dave produced a pot of walnut-based wood stain, but I chose to leave mine pale. I think the cherry wood looks very pretty, and has a lovely grain. The copper pins are bright and pink, and round the edges one can see the darkness where the handle was heated and burned into the wooden blocks.

The only thing we didn't do was sit around naming our swords. Alan and I named ours quietly to ourselves, but if we'd had more time and lots of alcohol we could have cut our tongues with the swords, named them and told stories of what the blade would do!

I think we were all surprised by how well the swords turned out, as we were all beginners to such things, but in the end we posed happily and proudly for a group photograph, brandishing our gleaming blades in the evening sunlight.



ON THE BOOKSHELF



**THE CLERK OF
BASINGSTOKE**
A Life of Walter de Merton
Michael Franks
(Alden Press, 2003)

Review by Anne Hawker

Mr Franks has done what he said he set out to do – produced an accurate, readable and attractively presented book.

He gives us what facts there are and shows his deductions from them, leaving us to decide whether or not they are acceptable. After nearly seven hundred and fifty years this must be the fairest method of presenting the life of Walter de Merton, “one of the few famous men connected with Basingstoke”.

Walter rose by his own efforts and character to some considerable heights, and yet at the same time cared for his family, friends and servants. In his lifetime he took trouble to help them and after his death remembered them in his Will.

All I knew, previously, about Walter de Merton could be written in two sentences. He came from Basingstoke. He established the Hospital of St John in Basingstoke and the college in Oxford called Merton College.

He had seven sisters and no brothers, and appears to have settled at least four of the sisters in marriage. It seems (on a lighter note) hardly surprising that he decided that he did not want ANY women employed in his new College!

ON THE BOOKSHELF



1895 A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF ETHEL LIZZIE MOODY A Young Lady from Basingstoke

Brian Butler
£2 + 45p postage

Review by Mary Oliver

A new little local history booklet has just reached our bookstall, charmingly titled '1895: A year in the life of Ethel Lizzie Moody, a young lady from Basingstoke'. The diary has been transcribed by her grandson, Brian Butler, who has added a commentary to expand some of the entries – identification of people and places etc. which greatly increases its interest for the local historian. Many of the families mentioned will be familiar to long-time residents of Basingstoke – Powell, Paice, Joice, Clift – and of course shops like 'The Little Dust Pan' in Church Street.

But what makes the book particularly appealing is the personality of this twenty-one year old which shines through the brief entries. She loved her large extended family and many friends, and her home in Basingstoke ('Oh delightful place') and her days are packed with activity – lots of music, sketching and painting, walking, dances, tennis, boating, card games, amateur dramatics and going to church, often St Michael's in the morning and walking to Basing for Evensong. Ethel Lizzie was less happy in London, where she taught in a small private school in Kensington. She was very homesick and would have been more so but for cousins living in nearby Hammersmith. However, she had many excursions with the pupils to art galleries and museums, as well as for confirmation classes, music exams etc, and she and her cousins enjoyed the theatre and 'ices at Chibnall's' and other treats.

I recommend this little book as a glimpse into a period not too distant but which had perhaps more in common with the times of Jane Austen than of now. It is a delight to read, and purchasing it will help to swell the Fabric Fund of St Michael's Church. St Michael's are extremely grateful to Brian Butler for his kind generosity.

Illustrations include Ethel Lizzie's own watercolour of the Holy Ghost Chapel, Basingstoke, and a photograph of a James Moody container and trailer (her father, James Moody advertised his business in London Street as "Complete House Furnisher" with interests in "Removals and Warehousing" – see Bob Applin's article below).

A Moody Wagon

Bob Applin



The steam lorry illustrated in the book "1895: Ethel Lizzie Moody" is a Wallis and Steevens W4 5ton steam wagon. They were first delivered in 1906. However, none delivered to Moody is recorded in the production list in the standard reference book on Wallis and Steevens *Wallis and Steevens – a history*, by RA Whitehead. The container on the back of the wagon is the standard pantehnicon for use on the railways; one can see the lifting slings. The trailer is a standard furniture trailer, Whitehead illustrates an identical one being pulled by a traction engine in 1914 (illustration 62). The wagon is an early model, later ones (1912 onwards) had a fairing along each side of the boiler and flywheel. Possibly Moody's container and trailer were borrowed for the occasion. Several are listed as being delivered to Pickfords. Was this the first delivery to Pickfords? Whitehead's illustration 42 is of a 1908 Pickfords' ensemble (not taken at an identifiable location). Comparing the two photographs I would say that Moody's predates Pickfords'; it has a taller chimney.

The photograph is almost certainly by Percy Pellatt, the Company Secretary at that time. Quoting Whitehead *Percy Pellatt, the protégé and informally adopted son of John Wallis, was the husband of May, one of the daughters of Francis Ashby Wallis. He was a very trusted employee and in 1920 was made a director. His hobby was photography and many of the excellent photographs in the works albums came from his camera. A favourite spot for photography was the open plateau of the London and South Western Railway's goods yard behind the works. Pellatt and the firm were on good terms with successive station masters and no one seemed to have minded.*

As W&S were probably the biggest local customer after Thornycrofts, who would dare to refuse?

It is a pity that Pellatt used a wide aperture lens for his photographs, losing the background detail.

The following notes on the W4 wagon are based on information supplied by Kevin Lockyer of Milestones Museum – steam enthusiast. The production details are from Whitehead.

The W4 was produced to compete with steam lorries that had been introduced by Fodens, Taskers and Thornycroft etc.; in fact Wallis & Steevens were involved initially in a patent infringement dispute with Fodens and had to modify their design. A total of 137 W4s were delivered between 1906 and 1924. The main period of production was 1908 (12) to 1917 (5) with 17 being delivered in 1913 and 13 in 1915.

The design was based on the W & S 4½ ton compound tractor chassis with a chain drive to the rear axle. W&S machines used a big boiler and low steam pressure, which was expensive on both coal and water; this was not a problem with their larger traction engines etc. But, for the wagon design the boiler had to be made considerably smaller without a compensating rise in the steam working pressure and therefore it was not big enough to do its job properly. The wagon, consequently, was underpowered and slow. (It could not have been all that bad because Pickfords issued several repeat orders –RA).

Kevin Lockyer has personal knowledge of one machine supplied to Swards of Petersfield in 1919. It was bought for furniture haulage but was soon relegated to hauling coal for the rest of Swards' fleet. Because it was so slow – maximum speed about 6 - 7mph – it was very unpopular with their drivers and was only used for a small number of trips. The wagon was sold to Nightingale's brick works at Steep Marsh where it was used for about 2 years and then converted to stationary engine to drive a pug mill. The remains of this engine are reputed to be in the footings of the chicken houses that were built on the site when Nightingales closed.

At least one of the current generation of Swards is a steam enthusiast who owns the very fine 1886 MARSHALL traction engine "Victoria Empress of India" which is currently on display at Milestones until June. For steam enthusiasts with e-mail the site, www.sewards-of-petersfield.co.uk, is well worth a visit. It gives "The history of a Victorian engineer and haulage contractor", pictures of their engines and along with a great deal more information, details of when and where Victoria will be steamed.

A VISIT TO THE URE MUSEUM AT READING UNIVERSITY

Paulline Williams

A group of 10 members visited the Ure Museum on the University campus, one of the most important collection of Greek ceramics in the UK (after the British Museum and the Ashmolean). It is **not** easy to find, but life teaches that nothing worthwhile usually is! Please take it from me that your journey will not be wasted. Prepare to be impressed. We were met by the enthusiastic John Hutchinson, whose lecture on Roman coins we enjoyed last September. We were shown the splendid collection of Greek and Roman funerary urns that had originally been gathered by Professor Percy Ure. His wife, Annie, had been Curator right up to the 1970s. They had journeyed and excavated together from the 1920s at various archaeological sites in southern Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Egypt. For me one of the benefits of this collection was the way the objects had been grouped to demonstrate differing sites and periods. One of the oldest items was a small (3" diameter) pottery dish found on a Brighton bric-a-brac stall for sale in the 1950s (1/6d in old money). There's hope for all us non-diggers! Anyone else who wants to visit, contact Agostina Hawkins on 0118 9316599.

CALENDAR

Thurs 15 May	MORE PATHE NEWS THROUGH THE 20 TH CENTURY David Lee	FWM
Sat 17 May	Visit to THE GRANGE, NORTHINGTON	BAHS
24-26 May	American Civil War Re-enactment from 2 pm	FBH
Wed 29 May	AGM; Speaker John Crook (Science Lecture Theatre, Peter Symonds College, Winchester, 7.30 pm	HFC
Tues 10 June	Evening walk with Robin Freeman (Historic Buildings Section)	HFC
Thurs 12 June	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (see page 2)	BAHS
Tues 17 June	Second evening walk with Robin Freeman	HFC
Sat 5 July	Summer outing to Farnham	HFC
5-6 July	"A Palace fit for an Emperor" Guided tour 3 pm	FBH
19-20 July	Basingstoke Mysteries: Community Drama, Basing House	
7 Aug	Society visit to Silchester excavations 6 pm for 6.30	BAHS
9-10 Aug	Friends Group Living History from 2 pm	FBH
Sat 23 Aug	Society trip to Bradford on Avon	BAHS

NB 2nd Sunday of the month, at Chilcomb House

BAHS = our Society; lectures 7.30 pm at Church Cottage
FBH = Friends of Basing House, at Basing House
HFC = Hampshire Field Club; we can send one representative
FWM = Friends of the Willis Museum, 7.30 at Willis Museum