

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER 177

November 2006

CONTENTS

<i>Page 2</i>	CHRISTMAS PARTY SOCIETY OUTINGS
<i>Page 3</i>	FIELDWORK REPORT
<i>Page 4</i>	ODIHAM CASTLE AND FOAM
<i>Page 5</i>	RESEARCH INTO ALMSHOUSES
<i>Page 6</i>	BASINGSTOKE TALKING HISTORY REPORT A NEW LIBRARY SERVICE
<i>Page 7</i>	RECENT EVENTS Church Cottage Open Day Angels' Wings and Such Things <i>and</i> Fame and Fashion
<i>Page 8</i>	VISIT TO SHETLAND
<i>Page 9</i>	NEWS FLASH – Old Kempshott Lane
<i>Page 10</i>	THE EASTWARD ORIENTATION OF OLD PARISH CHURCHES
<i>Page 12</i>	CALENDAR

!! REMINDER !! Annual subscriptions were due 1st September
Rates unchanged: £11 individuals, £15 family; £7 students and over 60s; over 60 family
rate £12. Please send your membership application form and cheque payable to BAHS
to Garth George, 71 Camrose Way, Basingstoke RG21 3AW. If you haven't signed a
Gift Aid form and would like to, please ring Garth. Tel 01256 464763.



Christmas Party

7.30 pm, Thursday 14th December, Church Cottage, Basingstoke
£1.50 (includes first drink)

A relaxed chance to meet up with other members and friends, with a glass of wine or soft drink and a finger buffet.

Offers of help to prepare or supply buffet food will be welcomed (the Society will refund expenses). Ring *Mary Oliver*, 01256324263

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Please bring a mystery object with you. We shall be running a competition with a prize for the object that no-one can identify and a prize for the person who correctly identifies the most objects. Note that the idea is that the objects should have some historical connection. They should also be able to withstand handling.

Society Outings

Saturday 9th December 2006 at 11 am
Guided Visit to the National
Monuments Record Centre, Swindon

The National Monuments Record is the public archive of English Heritage. It contains 10 million photographs, plans, database records and other information on the architecture and archaeology of England.

This guided tour of approximately one and a half hours provides a general introduction to the work and collections of the NMR and you can find out

- How the NMR can be of use to you
- What records are held
- How they can be accessed most effectively

Fee **£2.75 per person, to include tea and coffee.**

For those wishing to extend their visit, there are a number of eating places within a short walk of the NMR building, also the Retail Outlet Centre – ideal for Christmas shopping – and STEAM – Museum of the Great Western Railway – again both within easy walking distance.

If you would like to join this outing please contact Ginny so she can confirm numbers with the Record Centre (we need a minimum of 6 people to make out visit viable). She can be contacted via e-mail at ginny@poowntleycopse.co.uk or by phone on 01256 862165.

There is a large free car park at the front of the building, which is in Kemble Drive. (Avoid parking in the outlet car park, as this will incur a cost). Although the tour starts at 11 am, we aim to meet at the Outreach and Education Centre at the NMR prior to the start of the tour, at 10.45 am. If you need or can offer a lift, then please liaise with Ginny. A map will be made available nearer the time. *Please note there will not be an opportunity to undertake specific enquiries or research during this visit.*

Society Outings

Saturday 21st April 2007
Guided Visit to Petersfield market town

Advance notice of a date to put in your diaries for next year! Guided by a member of the Petersfield Area Historical Society; there will be a town walk in the morning, followed by lunch in a historic inn and an archaeological walk in the afternoon. More details will be issued in our next newsletter.

FIELDWORK REPORT

Mark Peryer
mperyer@f2s.com

I'm pleased to report that members of the society were back in action again over the summer at Silchester, Dunkirt Barn and Tidgrove Warren. The Whitchurch Whirlwinds (Diana, Martin and Tony) and Peter Stone put the rest of us to shame.

I spent a very hot but enjoyable week at Silchester at the end of July. Digging in gravel and sand was a frustrating new experience, because as soon as I found a feature in the sand it dried out in the hot sun and was lost from view. Thankfully, one day it rained during the night so that the next day I could see what was going on. Reading's Archaeology department enrolled 100 students for the 2005/6 academic year which meant that there were 150 people working on site this year. It was interesting to me to see how the planning and recording was organised, given that it was being done by 80-90% of those working on site.

There was a trip to Dunkirt Barn one Saturday in September to take a look at what Diana Medley and Peter Stone (along with Professor Sir Barry Cunliffe and about 30 other volunteers) had been getting up to. Dave Allen gave the site tour and took us through the chronology of the site, which was adjacent to a villa complex with several phases that was excavated last year. This season's work concerned an aisled hall that was developed and redeveloped at least twice with some high status rooms to the north, one of which had a hypocaust. There were some baths to the south of the building and in the later stages there were some corn-dryers.

We held another field walk in late September, this time at Swallick Farm which is just off the Alton road. This time we were treated to some warm pleasant sunshine, which made it even more enjoyable. On the day I thought we had found quite a few worked flints, but when I cleaned them up there were only one or two. However, we did find pottery shards of a Roman/mediaeval date and a mixture of things from a later date.

I hope to give a short presentation of the find densities at the end of the November meeting. I would like to thank Ginny Pringle for negotiating with the land owner, and Julian Porter for helping set up the "Starting Grid" the previous day. Plus, of course a big thank you also to those of you who came to walk.



The BAHS formation field walking team come to Swallick Farm

At the end of the September meeting I gave a short presentation on the Woodland Archaeology project. This new initiative is progressing, and the first batch of training will be on two successive Saturdays (18th and 25th November), with a second training session to be scheduled in January. I was able to fill the number of places I reserved for the November training with the names I had, but if you are interested in going on the January training, please let me know. The idea is to be ready to go in the New Year as soon as land owners have shot all their Pheasants.

In October, the society exhibited at a Hampshire Museums Service volunteers day at Milestones. The material on display related to the work that members of the society have put in at the Chilcomb House archaeological stores and archives and to the various digs at the Grange, Old Basing.

Marjolein is the county representative at the CBA (Council for British Archaeology) and reports that there is an initiative to clear ancient monuments that have become overgrown. The initiative is known as FOAM (Friends Of Ancient Monuments) and has been running the Wessex area under the leadership of Julian Richards. She has referred to this as a "green gym", and is compiling a list of sites that need this kind of TLC in the area. See Marjolein's piece on FOAM below for more details.

If you'd like to get on the field work email list or get involved with the above activities, then please contact me on 01256 780502 or drop me an e-mail.

ODIHAM CASTLE AND FOAM

Marjolein Mussellwhite

In my role as Hampshire Representative for the CBA Wessex, I have been attending several committee meetings in Salisbury. One of my fellow committee members is Julian Richards, who is heading a new organisation called FOAM (Friends of Ancient Monuments). FOAM's aim is to identify monuments that have been neglected and are in need of some TLC in the form of cutting back shrubs, small trees, long grass, etc. to bring them back to their full glory. Julian has been working with a group of volunteers in Wiltshire, but is very keen to see this expanding into other counties, and I too feel this is a very worthwhile effort.

I have been in contact with David Hopkins, County Archaeologist, and asked him to identify some suitable monuments that a group of volunteers might be able to tackle. One of the sites he has mentioned is Odiham Castle and I am now in the process of getting a project up and running. I need to work out all the details and also some suitable dates in conjunction with Phil Allen who manages the site, and I'm very much hoping that Julian Richards will be there to give direction and support to our work.



What I'm looking for is volunteers! Should you be interested in taking part, I would very much like to hear from you. I will then put your name on the list and keep you informed of progress and dates. So if you'd like to participate, please send me an e-mail on marjoleine_2000@hotmail.com, or call me on 01256 701192.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Would anyone like to help to edit the Newsletter
or make posters for our meetings?

Please ring me: Barbara Applin 01256 465439

Research into Almshouses

Two national societies have joined forces to research into the number and history of almshouses in England and Wales. Derek Spruce is involved with those in Hampshire. If you would like to help or can provide information, please contact Derek on 01256 702026 or derekspruce@phoncoop.coop

I recently gave a talk to the Friends of the Willis Museum: “**Taking the Pulse of Basingstoke**” – a Year on. It is good to report that sales of our book are still healthy, and that we are getting good feedback. As well as showing how the book was prepared and printed, I picked out some themes and showed what has been happening since publication – the advent of modern matrons at the hospital, changes to Primary Care Trusts etc, and also a novel way of fund-raising for The Ark with a lunch and a lecture by Myrddin Rees on recent advances in liver surgery! Georgina White and I represented the Society on that occasion, with a display about our book. I was expecting to have to look away during the lecture but the slides were riveting – bloodless surgery! And Merv got a brownie point from me by beginning with a reference to Babylonian and Etruscan knowledge about the liver!



Etruscan bronze model of sheep's liver



Etruscan augur using liver

Yes, we are still interested in recording memories about health matters and a whole range of other topics. I'd be glad to hear from anyone who would like to help with interviewing, transcribing, researching or the administration of the project (01256 465439; e-mail 10641.3542@compuserve.com).

We are getting to know our new digital equipment, with help from Barry Meehan of Basingstoke Library, whose South Ham group are beginning their interviews. And we are continuing the process of choosing interviews to make available on library loan

A new Library service

Joy Needham

Did you know that the Hampshire Library Service now offers considerable electronic access, often available remotely at home to library members? For some time this has included works like the *Dictionary of National Biography* and *Who's Who* and *Who was Who 1897 – 2006*.

Recently a new service has been added called UK Custom Journal online. It includes 50 titles, 44 being full text. The link is available from <http://www.hants.gov.uk/library/online-resources/pn/index.html>

Titles which will be of interest to historians are:

<i>Antiquity</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>	<i>History Today</i>
Index coverage: Mar 1, 1987 -	Index coverage: Nov 1, 1985 -	Index coverage: Jan 1, 1980 -
Full-text coverage: Mar 1, 1993 - Current	Full-text coverage: Jan 1, 1993 - Jun 1, 2004	Full-text coverage: Nov 1, 1992 - Current

Finally if you are doing any research you might like to know that in any Hampshire library you can book a pc and have access to *The Times Digital Archive* 1785 – 1985. Researchers can search through the complete digital edition of *The Times* (London), using keyword searching and hit-term highlighting to retrieve full facsimile images of either a specific article or a complete page. The entire newspaper is captured, with all articles, advertisements and illustrations/photos divided into categories to facilitate searching.

RECENT EVENTS

Church Cottage Open Day

This event for Heritage Open Day was a great success, with a fascinating “Time Line” and other displays in the Barn showing how Church Cottage had been used over the years – and still is, of course. Mary Oliver and Betty Godden have been researching St Michael’s Parish Magazines, which provided many fascinating snippets, and you could hear a recording of various people’s memories of Church Cottage. Bill Fergie gave an excellent talk, showing the various features that suggested how the building had been used and adapted over time. Most excitingly, the results of the dendrochronology survey were shown at the appropriate points. Yes, some were 1541 or 1542, roughly what might have been expected, but the real surprise was that only one bay of the Barn is late mediaeval or Tudor and the rest is 1746. Bill Fergie and Edward Roberts will be writing up their work on the history of the building, and we hope that Bill Fergie can repeat his talk to our Society in the New Year.

Congratulations to the Church Cottage team for an excellent day! Incidentally, there was a good report in Richard Garfield’s Memories on Monday page of The Gazette on 18th September. And if you don’t get the Monday Gazette, you miss some really interesting pieces on that page!

Angels’ Wings and Such Things *and* Fame and Fashion

This event too was a delight! A large audience came to Central Studio and enjoyed both films, with question sessions after each. There was a display of the Basingstoke Cope and other items designed by Atherton Harrison as well as a display of the work of the Basingstoke Video Film Makers.

Most of the money taken for tickets was distributed to the five churches featured in the first film.

Both films are now available on a DVD: £8.70 including postage & packing, from Doug Mathie, 3 Lymington Close, Basingstoke (01256 353222).

Visit to Shetland

Virginia Pringle



Having visited the fascinating Orkneys last year, I couldn't resist travelling further north in 2006 to see how the Shetland Isles would compare. Jarlshof and Mousa are certainly well known sites, but what else would the islands have to offer?

To the Vikings it was not only a place to settle, but a stopping off point for contact with the rest of Britain. However, many remains of settlements in the Shetlands date much older than this, varying from Neolithic through to Pictish, with plenty of evidence for trade and communication with other parts of Britain.

Changes in climate and the intervention of human action upon the Shetland landscape have culminated in a landscape based virtually entirely of peat moorland. Fortunately these conditions have led to generally good preservation conditions, as ancient features and settlements have not been ploughed out or destroyed to the extent that would have happened further south.

Mousa is one of the best known Iron Age brochs in Scotland and the Isles. Certainly well worth a visit, if not only for the sense of vertigo to be experienced from the top after a dark and tricky climb up the inside stair well, but also to see the seals sunning themselves on the beaches of the island and the brilliant diversity of birdlife. However, Mousa is only one of about 120 broch ruins throughout the Shetlands! What was the function of these impressive towers? Exactly how and why did they develop? No-one knows for sure. Jarlshof, so named after its Viking times, also has the ruins of a broch (now partially eroded by the sea), as does the Iron Age village of Old Scatness.

At Jarlshof it is possible to wander at leisure amongst the Neolithic and Bronze Age ruins of houses, although the remains of the broch are eclipsed by the amazing Pictish wheelhouse. This is virtually complete - just missing its roof! A few yards from here are the remains of the Viking farmstead. It is difficult to understand why the Norse didn't destroy and re-use the stone from the wheelhouse.

However, Jarlshof is now neat and tidy, with visitor centre in place and audio equipment available for those visiting. In contrast, just down the road is Old Scatness, still under excavation and very much in a raw state. Far more interesting! This is a site comprising of a broch and several wheelhouses clumped together. The walls are so complex that photos taken from above would make a good subject for a large jigsaw puzzle. The annual excavations are run by Bradford University and excitement is added by the presence of a living history team comprising entirely of archaeologists, wearing replica ancient costumes, (is this a new trend for archaeologists? - will togas be worn next year at Silchester?). Visitors are made welcome and the living history team give ad hoc informal tours and demonstrations on the use of various artefacts. There is also the opportunity for light-hearted participation in an ancient Norse game involving teams throwing sticks at skittle-like wooden jars (and at each other). The site has acres of tasteful blue tarpaulins, held down by rubber tyres (testament to the adverse conditions that can manifest in the Shetlands).

Evidence of the Neolithic is scattered throughout the islands, but is particularly well represented further north by the Staneydale Temple (ruins of a mysterious building, perhaps an assembly place) and other nearby ruins of several Neolithic houses dotted across the hillsides and easily accessible for wandering around. These seem to be located in one area of the landscape, whereas many burial cists are situated in an arc further to the north in a landscape dotted with numerous tiny lochs and hills, as if it were a prehistoric cemetery.

Visits to numerous ruins of watermills bring the visitor into more recent historic times, and on St Ninian's Isle a visit can be paid to the ruins of a Celtic chapel where a local schoolboy found a hoard of silver treasure in 1958. At Lerwick there is a fine museum to visit (although during 2006 it was in the process of relocation) as well as many other museums and heritage centres scattered across the islands. Place names are distinctly Norse, and the view from Tingwall (the location for the old Norse parliament) is decidedly striking - looking south down a voe (sound) and across to numerous islets. And for those wanting to participate in Viking revelry, there is always the colourful festival of Up Helly Aa to attend during the winter!

One last note, - the islanders are very friendly and extremely hospitable. On a quick visit to Foula, Britain's most remote inhabited island where only 35 or so people live, (25 miles west of mainland Shetland), I found the locals had been very excited about an archaeological society that had spent time there the previous year doing geophysical work, tracing evidence of ancient settlements. The islanders were keen to emphasise that any groups would be made most welcome if they ever wished to come and dig on the island. Now there's a challenge!

News Flash!

Pre-Construct Archaeology are undertaking a 5% evaluation of the site for the Barratt houses in Old Kempshott Lane. They plan to strip part of the site and we hope to arrange a site visit.

The Eastward Orientation of Old Parish Churches

Richard Dexter

One of the more familiar and endearing features of our landscape is seeing the old parish churches all facing in an easterly direction in spite of any local topographical features which might make another alignment easier.

Why east? Traditionally the east is the direction of the Resurrection, the rising sun and the start of the new day. However on a closer look there always seems to be a slight variation in the direction in which churches point, that it is not always exactly to the geographical east but more often on an alignment slightly away from the true compass bearing. It used to be thought that this discrepancy (if it was indeed noticed) was due to the carelessness of medieval builders. Later the idea grew up that it was to conform to a tradition whereby a church would be built pointing in the direction of the sunrise on the patronal saint's day. But after much further research it had been shown that there appeared to be a relationship between the date of the patronal feast day and the direction of the rising sun.

However in a recent article "*Crooked Churches and Sainly Sunrises*" in *Church Archaeology* Vol 7/8/9 2006 James Muirden has sought to challenge this conclusion by pointing out that in the past insufficient account has been taken of various varying factors which would cloud the result of research. In brief these are:

- a.) not taking into account the apparent date of the local sunrise in any particular location
- b.) not allowing for the change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar
- and c.) forgetting the name of the original pre-reformation patron saint.

If these factors are all taken into consideration, some very interesting observations can be made.

It has in the past been assumed that the date and direction of sunrise was the same for every parish, but with local trees and hills how many churches have a direct line of sight to the distant horizon in the east?. Given that between the two solstices (winter and summer) there is nearly a 90° arc on the horizon over which the rising sun appears to travel over the six months, it follows that sunrise 'moves' about half a degree along the horizon each day. But if you take into account a local rise in the land surface, for example, of say sixty feet half a mile away this would give a misreading of one degree of arc on the local horizon since the sun in this country always rises on a slant. This therefore will give a miscalculation of about two to three days compared with a reckoning made by using modern astrophysical data based on a theoretical distant horizon. It follows that each location has its own and unique sunrise date and direction. Moreover, as the rising sun appears to move both forwards and backwards across the arc on the eastern horizon, there will always be two days in the year (spring and autumn) on which the sun rises at any one given point.

There is, then, the problem of the change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. The former was set up by Julius Caesar in BC 64 on the premise that a year was 365¼ days but this has proved to be too long. Over the course of the millennia the calendar date fell behind the celestial date at the rate of one day every 130 years. Thus in, say, AD 850 the calendar date was already four days behind the celestial date and by AD 1450 it was nine days later. Although this was corrected with the Gregorian calendar (Pope Gregory XIII r.1572-85) this was not effected in England until 1752.

This means that all the recorded dates before then are out of phase with modern dating by varying amounts, although the calendar at the time was steadfastly observed. So any saint's day in the past has to be duly corrected if it is to be applied to today's dates.

And then there is the other problem of the uncertainty of the identity of the particular saint to whom the dedication has been given. Quite often there could be a number of dedications for any one particular church – depending on whose relics were being venerated – which over the course of time have been lost or forgotten. This was particularly so over the period of the Reformation when the veneration of local saints' relics was proscribed. There are, for example, only one in five churches in the county of Devon where the dedication is known with any certainty before the year 1300.

Having taken all these variables on board, there remains one further feature to take into account and that is the apparent crooked alignment often seen in churches when looking up towards the altar from the west end. Again, in the past whenever this was noticed it was assumed that this was mere carelessness on the part of the masons; there then grew up the somewhat whimsical suggestion in Victorian times that a mis-aligned chancel represented the inclined head of a 'weeping Christ'. However this anomaly has now been taken more seriously and has proved to be a very useful piece of evidence for proving the new theory that celestial alignment of churches was in fact a reality.

There are various ways that churches can be seen as being 'crooked'. The obvious one is when the chancel is completely aligned off-centre like the coaches of a train going round a corner. Another is when just the east end wall is not at right angle to the north and south walls of the chancel or when one side wall of the chancel is not parallel to the other or indeed when a side chapel or side aisle wall is not straight with the rest of the church. If one then accepts that the building of the wall/extension is of a different date and that when it was built it was aligned 'correctly' at the time of building (and having taken into account all the other corrections mentioned above) it is often perceived that it too was built on a celestial bearing, namely the direction of sunrise on the day of the dedication saint at the time of building. However, as the Julian calendar shifts the date away from the correct celestial date by one day in 130 years, the alternative alignment would be either to the north or south of the main easterly direction, depending on whether it was built earlier or later than the rest of the fabric. IF it is then known either by documentary or archaeological evidence whether the construction is either earlier or later than the main building AND all the other corrections can be made, it can be deduced which of the two alternative dates in spring or autumn the day of sunrise refers to. For example, in the case of a known younger construction, the building will either point too far to the left of east (in spring) or too far to the right (in autumn) of the main building line, thus indicating which of the alternative spring and autumn dates are relevant.

The author then goes on to say that he has found in some cases that it has been possible to work out from the orientation and date of construction a possible feast day on which a particular church was aligned. Examples he quotes are 1 September (Feast of St Giles) and 14 September (Feast of the Holy Cross) where neither name now appears in that church's records.

All his work was done in the county of Devon but up to now he finds that he has been hindered by the lack of exact dating of various parts of the fabric of the churches in question. This, he says, will have to await further work being done by both architectural historians and church archaeologists. There is, though, enough evidence at present to convince both him and, I think, the reader, that the alignment of our parish churches in the direction of sunrise on the day of the patron saint is no longer merely conjecture.

CALENDAR

Tues 14 Nov	AGM and Cheese & Wine	FBH
Wed 15 Nov	THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND FROM PUB SIGNS	TADS
Thurs 16 Nov	EXPLORING VICTORIAN ALTON Tony Cross	FWM
Sat 18 Nov	THE ROMANS REVEALED – new evidence and recent research: Arch Section conference & AGM	HFC
Thurs 14 Dec	WINE AND CHEESE	BAHS
Tues 9 Jan	TRAVEL & TRANSPORT IN DAYS GONE BY Rupert Willoughby	FBH
Thurs 11 Jan 07	RICHARD III Prof. Michael Hicks	BAHS
Fri 26 Jan	ENGLAND'S LOST EDEN: The Story of the New Forest Shakers: Philip Hoare 8 pm	HFC
Thurs 8 Feb	HUMAN EVOLUTION Prof. Christ Stringer	BAHS
Tues 13 Feb	EXCAVATIONS IN THE GRANGE FIELD David Allen	FBH
Thurs 8 March	WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM HUMAN BONES? Simon Mays	BAHS
Tues 13 March	WITH LOVE FROM THE TRENCHES – Cards of the First World War: Geoff Salter	FBH
Thurs 12 April	KIPLIN HALL: A JACOBAN HOUSE AND ITS FAMILIES Dawn Webster	BAHS
Sat 21 April	LANDSCAPE SECTION CONFERENCE	HFC
Thurs 10 May	THE COUNTY'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTION: BEHIND THE SCENES Kay Ainsworth	BAHS

BAHS Our Society; lectures 7.30 pm at Church Cottage

FBH Friends of Basing House, 7.30 pm, Basing House new tea room

FWM Friends of the Willis Museum, 7.30 pm at the museum

HFC Hampshire Field Club; Science Lecture Theatre, Peter Symonds College, Winchester. We can send one representative; details from our Secretary

TADS Tadley & District History Society, 8 pm St Paul's Church Hall, The Green, Tadley

Secretary: Margaret Porter 01256 356012

Website <http://www.bahsoc.org.uk>

Items for Newsletter to Barbara Applin; e-mail 106441.3542@compuserve.com