

B A S I N G S T O K E
 A R C H A E O L O G I C A L
 S O C I E T Y

N E W S L E T T E R

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 * Weekends to Excavation at VIABLES FARM, Basingstoke *
 * 22 Sept. *
 *
 * Tuesday 3 Sept. Visit to DANEbury. Meet at Danebury car park, *
 * 7 pm. *
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 * Thursday 19 Hants Field Club excursion to OXFORD. 9.30 am *
 * Sept. coach leaves Winchester Railway Station. 10.30 *
 * short stop at Newbury. Noon: visit Cathedral *
 * (Christchurch College). Members' own arrangements *
 * for lunch. 2.30 meet Mr J F A Mason, Librarian, *
 * at Christchurch entrance for tour of college. *
 * 4.30 coach leaves for Winchester. Fare £1. Tickets *
 * from Southgate World Travel, 1 Black Swan Buildings *
 * Southgate St, Winchester. *
 *
 * Thursday 26 Lecture by Max Dacre on PORTWAY B, ANDOVER. *
 * Sept. 7.30 pm at Chute House *
 *
 * Sunday 29 Basingstoke Field Society visit to BUTSER. *
 * Sept. BAS members who didn't manage to visit Butser on *
 * 4th August have been invited to join the Field *
 * Society on their visit. Meet at Butser car park *
 * 2.15 pm *
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Visit to DANEBURY
Tuesday, 3rd. September

Vic Emery has again agreed to guide us round the excavations - still in progress - at the Iron Age hillfort of Danebury. Members who visited this site last year and the year before will know how interesting this is.

Meet at Danebury car park at 7 pm. Site reference: SU 324 377, 3 miles NW of Stockbridge.

**** NOTE THE CHANGED DATE, PLEASE.

Excavation
VIABLES, BASINGSTOKE

The excavation at Viables Farm is progressing well, but more help is needed for the remaining weekends:

7th/8th September
 14th/15th September
 21st/22nd September

Lecture
PORTWAY B, ANDOVER

The first lecture of 1974-5 will be on Thursday, 26th September at 7.30 pm at Chute House. Max Dacre will be lecturing on the fascinating site which he showed us on the Devizes outing. From Bronze Age round barrows to an Anglo-Saxon cemetery.

The full lecture programme will be circulated shortly.

ADDRESSES

We are considering circulating with the next Newsletter a list of members' names and addresses. This is partly so that anyone who is looking at any earth scraping etc can, if they wish, get in touch with another member in the area to help record what (if anything) is to be seen. Negative evidence is useful too - and Josie Wall will be glad to have reports for her Register of Finds. If any members object to having their names and addresses publicised, will they please let Barbara Applin or Richard Searle know during September?

Meanwhile, some useful addresses:

Treasurer Peter C Heath, 1 Hammond Rd, Basingstoke Tel: 27713
Secretary Richard Searle, 8 Band Hall Place, Hook Tel: Hook 2036
 (Richard will be taking over soon as Secretary)

Visit to BUTSER ANCIENT FARM

On Sunday, August 4th fifteen of the Society met in the car park at Butser, in pouring rain. Peter Reynolds came out of the mist to direct us, but by the time we had put on our boots it was impossible to see across the field, and a few of us got lost on the way down. However, the weather was clearer at the farm, and we were able to see the first exhibit (the St Kilda sheep, the nearest living relatives to prehistoric sheep). They are more like goats than sheep, slender and dark; both ewe and ram have horns. They seemed remarkably tame, and ran to meet us.

We saw two sorts of field, the small 'hoe plot' and the larger fields further away. The smaller plot had crops growing in strips, rather like an allotment. The crops were Einkorn, woad (first and second year stages), six-row barley, rye, club wheat and flax. In the larger fields were Emmer and Spelt, two early wheats, and Celtic Beans. Both sets of crops had to be fenced with wire netting to keep off the rabbits, which were not there to be a bother in the Iron Age, and the small plots were also attacked by birds. The Beans had suffered from blackfly and some other disaster. In spite of all this, the crop of grain was much higher than had been predicted, fourteen hundredweight rather than five. The protein content of the grain is 17%, twice that of modern corn.

More corn was being grown in the 'Slash and Burn' experiment at the edge of the wood. A clearing had been made, leaving the stumps, and one half of the clearing had a depth of 6 cm of burnt material left on it, the other having the cut wood. The yields of both parts are to be compared.

There was one complete hut, one with the framework being put together, and a turf hut, which had been allowed to collapse. The complete hut was built with wattle and daub walls and thatched roof. We could see that the thatch was effective as a roof, for in spite of the rain, it was dry inside the hut. It was a circular hut, one post being in the middle of the floor, which was of trodden chalk. The only light came in through the doorway, but after we had all come in and stood round the walls, it was quite light enough. The hut contained two small baking ovens, and a pail of something revolting, possibly rawhide, which had been used to tie the roof poles together. The wall posts were ash, the thinner poles hazel. Although the roof weighed two tons, the posts of the wall needed to be put in only 10 inches deep. The hut had survived two hurricanes. The turf hut had a central post and a wall of turf, and archaeologically would have shown just one post hole. Another thing to leave a single hole would have been one of the haystacks we saw which had a central pole round which the hay had been piled. The making of hurdles, when a line of posts is used to keep the hurdle in shape while it is being woven, would also result in a short line of holes.

We were shown a series of pits outside the hut. They were small experimental pits, with different linings, to see how well grain stored in them, and how long it took for a pit to go sour. None has yet done this. Where some pottery had been made, several kilns had been used for firing the pots. The first method, piling the pots in a shallow depression, covering with straw, wood and turf, gave quite a deep pit after several firings, and the rain washed the chalk clean, so that it would have been difficult to decide what the pit had been used for, if it had been found in a dig.

All this research being done gives an idea of the possible explanations for the holes we found on our own digs. The lively lecture of Peter Reynolds let us forget the miserable weather, as he told us not to be too sorry for the Iron Age farmer, who appears not to have been the poor scrabbling savage of some history books.

ANN HAWKER

Note Peter Reynolds will be lecturing to the Society on 30th January 1975. He will also be giving the WEA classes on the Iron Age, in Basingstoke.

MARC 3.

Work is progressing well on the excavation of the Bronze Age ovoid barrow at Micheldever Wood. The primary levels are now being reached on this very unusual site, and work is due to be completed in the next week or so. Three new sites are to be tackled this year! a ring ditch, probably another barrow, but with indications of secondary Saxon burials, and two settlement sites with associated trackways. Extra help at weekends would be greatly appreciated with so much work to be done in order to keep up to schedule. It is an ideal opportunity for us to gain the experience of working with a well equipped, full time professional team. Anyone who is interested in helping should contact either me or Peter Fasham, MARC 3 Archaeological Director at Winchester 4971.

MARY OLIVER
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