

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BAHSOC

Newsletter 191 May 2010

CONTENTS

- Page 2** NOTICE BOARD
"The King's Daughter", Basing House, BAHS visits to Oxford & Silchester
- Page 3** FIELDWORK REPORT
BAHS TRIP TO MALTA
- Page 4** The UnconVINcing Coda
- Page 6** IN MEMORY OF ANDREW DUCKWORTH
AND A SAD GOODBYE TO SUE
- Page 7** A LETTER TO THE EDITORS
BASINGSTOKE TALKING HISTORY
- Page 8** AN EXCITING ADVENTURE WITH A BEAR, A TRUE STORY
- Page 12** HUMAN REMAINS WORKSHOP
- Page 13** BOOKSHELF *EUROPE'S TRAGEDY: A HISTORY OF THE THIRTY YEARS WAR*
- Page 15** HAMPSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

See page 2 for details of Penny's new book, and come to hear her talk about it after the AGM on 10th June.



NOTICE BOARD



"THE KING'S DAUGHTER"

Long standing Society member, Penny Ingham, successfully launched her novel 'The King's Daughter' through Cava Books at Waterstones in March. Amidst wine and an array of tasty snacks, Penny read a short excerpt from the book to an enthusiastic company of friends, family and press. *See our front cover.*

"The King's Daughter" centres on the story of King Alfred's daughter Elflaede and her relationship with leader of the Danes, Guthrum during the ninth century when the Saxons were vigorously attempting to defend their kingdom.

An excellent book to curl up with and proving hard to put down.

Penny will give a short presentation about this book after the Society's AGM on Thursday, 10 June.



BASING HOUSE

Advance news - Basing House is due to re-open in August.

A Sealed Knot event over the August Bank Holiday weekend, 28th-30th August.

Living History on the Saturday within the site.

Battles on the Sunday and Monday on the Common.

Watch the website www3.hants.gov.uk/basing-house for more up-to-date information.



BAHS VISITS

OXFORD Saturday 26th June

A guided walking tour of the city will start from the Redbridge Park and Ride at 10:00. followed by a visit to the recently re-vamped Ashmolean Museum. If you are interested in coming, please contact Ginny Pringle ginny@powntleycopse.co.uk or **01420 550028**.

SILCHESTER Thursday 29th July

Meet at Silchester car park at 6 pm for a guided visit at 6.30. Remember, it takes about 20 minutes to walk to the site.

Fieldwork Report

Mark Peryer

During February various members joined in some woodland surveys around Cholderton. We surveyed 3 areas of woodland in all, and we found and located a mixture of Bronze Age and landscape features dating from much nearer to our own time. The next phase of the project is to finish off an excavation that was started on a small late Bronze Age enclosure. This started off on the weekend of the 24th/25th April and will continue on the last weekend of every month ending in September. You are welcome to join in and you can get further details from Briony Laylor, or myself.

Nearer to home, this year's excavation at Basing House will be **from the 24th May to the 4th June**. It will involve some 'rescue archaeology' on a cut into one of the civil war defensive earthworks made by the Aldermaston Archaeological Society in the mid-sixties. There will be some recording of the Roman features they uncovered, and then some landscaped backfilling to restore the original shape of the earthwork. Application forms for the dig are available now; please contact me if you would like to get involved and have not received a form.

We are also planning a short small-scale excavation at Kimpton, (near Thruxton) **either in late August or early September**, the exact timing will depend on the crop currently growing in the field. The purpose of the excavation is to determine the existence of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery following the find of a funerary bucket from that period by a metal detectorist. If you are interested and likely to be around at this time, please let me know.

If you would like to get involved with any of our field work activities, please speak to me after a society meeting, email me (mperyer@f2s.com) or call me on **01256 780502**.

BAHS trip to Malta, March 2010

Mary Oliver

The recent field trip to Malta can definitely be regarded as a great success, and was very much enjoyed by the 12 Society members, including Kay Ainsworth our resident expert, who joined us. We had a packed programme, as you will have seen from previous Newsletters, but our Chairman, Mark, had really done his homework and we made the best use of the time available to us. Our hotel in Sliema was very well placed (sea in both directions – a bit confusing!) and the two hire cars, brilliantly driven by Mark and Ian, made it possible to cover much more than if we had been dependent on public transport, quirky though the local buses were. In fact the friendly rivalry between the two vehicles (points lost for the number of U-turns) and navigating with the maps supplied, all added to the fun.

The sites were simply terrific, a wonderful variety of periods from prehistoric to Roman, early Christian and medieval, the Knights of St John, and the recent history, there was something for everyone. We did concentrate on the unique, impressive megalithic temples, and managed to visit the majority of them - six one day, including one in a hotel complex! We were guided there by Brian Cox, who used to be a member, and who now lives in Malta; his local knowledge was most helpful. Tarxien, with the sun shining on the curvilinear ornament so reminiscent of Orkney, was perhaps my favourite. Kay and Mark together had produced a booklet for us, noting the main points, and we had Kay on site to guide us round and answer questions. Kay was rather upset when she first saw that some of the sites had been covered by a huge umbrella structure, to protect them from further weathering – although necessary, it did detract from the atmosphere.

Most marks for atmosphere has to go to the Hypogeum, with its many chambers carved out of the limestone for the burial of the dead c3700 BC, its architecture echoing the above-ground temples. Among the wonderful finds was a little statue of a recumbent lady of generous proportions asleep on a bed; it was wonderfully detailed, showing her costume, (pleated skirt?), her head cushioned on her arms, and even the stringing of the bed beneath the mattress. We visited the excellent museum in Valletta to see her and many other treasures.



Some sites were more difficult to find and access than others, but we were usually successful in the end. The most tricky were the enigmatic cart-ruts (Clapham Junction!) which we eventually tracked down on a rough hillside just as the sun set – wonderful sky, no broken ankles and lots of discussion about their formation and date.

We only visited one Roman site – the domus in Mdina/Rabat, but it was well worth it, especially for the mosaics. The same day, we explored the Citadel of Mdina with its palaces and cathedral, and also the catacombs in Rabat, one of which had some surviving wall paintings.

Our luck was out for the trip to Gozo, the weather was really wet and windy – just like home! The bonus was some wonderfully wild seas. We kept to our programme and had a great day on Gozo, with its early Ggantija temple, an interesting mill, and the capital at Victoria – another citadel and excellent museum containing the Brochdorff Circle figurines which are fascinating.

As I came back a day earlier than the rest of the group, I missed out on the day in Valletta, but I was impressed by the visit I did have, and managed to see the Cathedral, which houses the famous painting by Caravaggio of the death of John the Baptist; we even managed a snack in Kay's favourite café which she remembers from her childhood on the island.

We were a very friendly group, looked out for each other, usually shared our evening meals and often games of Scrabble afterwards. The fertility goddess aspect of Malta's prehistoric culture so much in evidence was matched by the winning score of the last Scrabble game with 'sexgod' reasserting male pride!

All of us who went were in no doubt of the debt of gratitude we owed to Kay, Ian, and especially Mark, who could have a great career as holiday organiser if he felt like a change of direction. There is already talk of next year I can only recommend you to watch this space!

The UnconVINcIng Coda

Lord Walters

One night on their recent visit to Malta, the Nights Templers called a panic meeting. They had been getting their 5 a day Temple input and were beginning to suffer burn-out. As usual, their biggest problem was interpretation - just what were these Temples for? Their official minder had claimed not to know, her excuse being that she had not lived on the islands when the temples were in use. However, the Nights were suspicious that she might not be telling the whole truth.

"I think there's a big cover up," said Lord Holmes, always one to go right to heart of the matter. "If you look at the shape of the temples, they follow the curves of these mother goddesses they were fixated about; if you look at where the entrance is it's obvious what's going on."

Lady Holmes rolled her eyes, knowing from years of experience where her husband's mind was wandering to. "Well, they could also be maternity hospitals. The shape could suggest that, and there could be a spiritual dimension as well, with the spirits of the dead being received by the unborn child."

Lord Measures shook his head in violent disagreement. "I don't think so. I think they're domestic buildings. There's no evidence of any other houses or domestic structures, so it stands to reason that these are the places where the early Maltese lived. The population wouldn't have been that big and they could have shared out the various alcoves."

Lord Placer was not convinced. Showing his commercial background, he presented his theory that the Temples were shops or emporiums for mass-produced traded goods. "Look at the site at Tarxien, they have a fat lady on display and you could obviously buy small scale replicas; the evidence is there, look at what's in the museums."

Shivering, on account of his warm-blooded nature, Lord Walters begged to differ. "I've been on this island a week and that cold wind hasn't stopped blowing once. I think they're wind breaks, look at how there are always benches to sit on to avoid the wind."

What were the Nights Templers going to do? There were five theories and no common ground.

"Well, they certainly went to a lot of effort to build these places," said Lord Measures appreciatively. All the other Templers sighed in agreement.

"You know what, don't you?" They all nodded smiled and said simultaneously – "They're ritual!"

Their Nights' work done, the Templers got down to the more serious business of ordering some drinks.

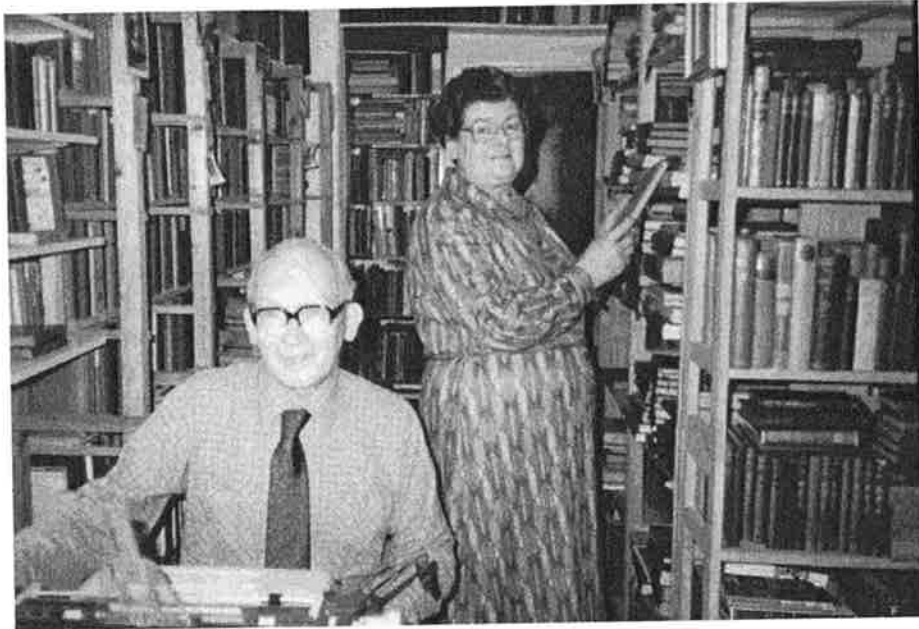
Any link between the Templers and any living people is entirely co-incidental.



**The BAHS Templers bag Tarxien Temple
IN MEMORY OF ANDREW DUCKWORTH**

Barbara Applin

We were very sad to hear of the death of Andrew Duckworth, at the splendid age of 97. Andrew and his wife Sarah, who died some years ago, were hard-working members of the BAHS committee in its early years. Sarah was a most efficient treasurer and Andrew our publicity officer. He also contributed many thoughtful and beautifully-written articles to our Newsletter.



The photograph shows Andrew and Sarah in their "Book Room", a former grocery shop attached to their house in Pack Lane. On retirement they had set up the Book Search business "Sen Books", locating out-of-print books for clients worldwide. They would spend just as much effort on finding a small inexpensive but out-of-print book as on searching for rare first editions. And the Book Room, as you can imagine, was a delight to explore!

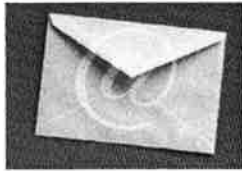
Eventually wanting to be nearer family, they moved from Basingstoke to the appropriate address of Longbarrow Close in South Wonston. When Sarah died Andrew developed his IT skills to continue with Sen Books, and he undertook research for clients, often in the Bodleian. He joined WARG (the Winchester Archaeological Research Group) and the South Wonston Local History Group (which has now amalgamated with the Dever Valley Local History Society), as "a very diligent researcher"..

Peter and Jean Heath, Bob and I went to Andrew's funeral service at Basingstoke Crematorium, representing BAHS, and we discovered much that we hadn't known before. He was a keen cyclist and canoeist, and in his early working life he had been involved with the development of the "sound box" used when "talkies" came in.

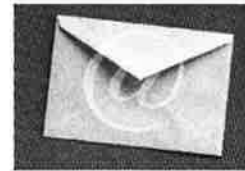
AND A SAD GOODBYE TO SUE

We are also sad to tell you of the recent death of Sue Offord, who, with her husband Mark had been stalwarts of our Society's excavations at Ructstalls Hill - Sue helped to draw the small finds for the publication of the site.

Sue was a talented artist, fully involved with the life of Old Basing, especially the Friends of St Mary's Church, and she gave a great deal of creativity and time to the village Flower Festival and Old Basing pantomimes.



Letter to the Editors



To the Editors,

I was wondering whether it was generally known that in the April issue of *History Today* there is the first of a series of articles on 'Digital History' - by which is meant the placing of historical archives on line.

Not only are an increasing number of local, national and international archives appearing in digitised form but also there is an interesting array of additional self-help programs available to assist the researcher such as 'Wordle' which enables one to 'word mine' a text for various characteristics like word-patterns and use of phrases unique to a given author. One can tailor-make these programs to one's own requirements; there are tell-you-how-to-do-it instructions available.

As well as reading the archive it is now possible to delve deeper into an archive and extract information (metadata) that is electronically buried deep in the records that is not generally available to the hands-on researcher who is looking at original documents. Such a case is the Old Bailey Proceedings from 1674 where extra demographic information on gender and case type can be read by a web browser.

More than passing reference is made to the use of 'wiki' type pages connected to various web sites where researchers can compare notes. And also mention is made of picture and movie archives that record events in the more recent past. Our old friends Twitter and YouTube receive their fair share of coverage.

The whole article can be read on www.historytoday.com/digitalhistory with its links. Unfortunately the one thing it does not say is how much of all this is available free of charge. Much of it I know is free, but be prepared to have to sign up for access etc. If anybody has problems in accessing this article, just drop me a line.

Richard Dexter (rjdexter@btinternet.com)



Report by Barbara Applin

Recent Interviews include:

- John Mussellwhite about Mussellwhites, major builders in Basingstoke (and in other places farther away than I had realized)
- Derek Wren (architect, author of "Dear Mr Willis" and the "Story of Basingstoke" DVD)
- Mac Capelin (Basingstoke Development Group)
- Cllr George Hood (former Mayor)
- Peter Stone (our own member, about donations to the Willis Museum)

Can anyone tell us more about education in Basingstoke, other builders, architects and people involved in Basingstoke's expansion? Would anyone with special interests in these fields like to undertake an interview?

Work on our forthcoming book about The Co-op in Basingstoke continues. Ideas for a catchy title welcome!

An exciting adventure with a bear, a true story

*By Harry Armstrong
(trainee gardener at Oakley Hall 1881-1887).*

On reading the title of this story the imagination of the reader may at once lead him to picture a scene in the Rocky Mountains or some other equally romantic place abroad, but no, it happened in quiet rural England in the grounds of that beautiful estate known as Oakley Hall in Hampshire . . .

The Hall stands in the centre of a lovely park, well wooded with magnificent Beech and Elm trees with, here and there, large plantations of dark fir trees, and is approached by a splendid carriage drive, which beginning at the East Lodge, sweeps round like a rainbow to the North entrance.

A large forecourt with two fine specimens of art metal work in the gates, which are to be seen at the entrance and exit. The south front looks out onto a sunken garden, beautifully laid out, with a fountain in the centre. Beyond are the tennis courts and the lawn and shrubberies. 16 acres in all, and as you can imagine a beautiful and imposing place.

Now to understand and follow my story you must come with me to the western side of the house, where are the servant's quarters, the dairy and the stables. The road approaching the stables branches out from the carriage drive and continues past the gardens down to the farm, where adjoining you will see the Bailiff's cottage. The road running past the garden is flanked on one side by a beautifully kept yew hedge 8ft high and on the opposite side a laurel bank. I want you to keep this in mind, for these hedges were like a wall enclosing the road with only two gateways, one at the stable end and the other a large gate midway opening to the gardens.

Now the owner of this estate at the time of which I am writing was William Wither Bramston Beach Esq. MP and sometime Father of the House of Commons.

It was a great day in the history of the place when the eldest son, Archibald, an officer in the old 60th Rifles, came home after a long sojourn abroad. Oh, the excitement of preparation and then the welcome home. It was indeed a great day for the family and for all concerned. A magnificent pair of bays which were harnessed to a fine Landau (no motor can ever approach a horse in dignity or beauty), was sent to meet Master Archie at the Station. When they arrived at the lodge gates they were met by the tenants. The horses were then taken out, ropes fixed to the carriage, and amidst cheers and shouts of welcome they were drawn to the house.

Mr Archie then stood on the steps of the entrance hall and made a very fine speech, in the course of which he remarked that he had brought home with him a new tenant, which he would hand over to the care of the Bailiff. This proved to be a young bear and in time the Bailiff became very fond of it and the bear likewise grew very attached to the Bailiff and would follow him anywhere.

The bear grew quickly and waxed mighty in spirit, so that he had to be chained up to keep him from mischief. He was chained to a large beech tree in the plantation at the end of the road leading from the gardens and in front of the Bailiff's house. A large barrel made a nice house for him to sleep in at night and a fine place to dance on in the day time, which he would do for quite a long time. He was very amusing in many ways and would take food from your hand, turn head over heels, throw pieces of wood about and perform many other funny little tricks.

Now my father was one of the carpenters employed on the estate and the carpenters' shop and sawmills were close by the Bailiff's House.

I was quite a lad at the time and was employed in the gardens, starting work at 6 o'clock and at 8 o'clock going down the road past the bear to breakfast with my father in the carpenters' shop. How the memory of those days lingers with me in all its simple detail. The glorious morning air, the healthy appetite, the lovely smell of home cured bacon being toasted in front of a roasting fire, intermingled with the smell of pine wood and the dear old faces long since passed away. Some of these things may sound trivial but to me how dear the memory.

Well, now it is time we got to this adventure. It happened one morning as I was going down the road from the gardens to breakfast with my Dad, that I saw in front of me a man. A very tall man he was and thin. As I got nearer I saw that it was the head groom, and as I realised this he got over the fence beside the road where the bear was, for the hedges finished near there and the plantations opened out. He went up to the bear who immediately rose up on his hind legs and stretched out his paws as he usually did. The groom offered the bear an apple, and as he was about to take it, the groom snatched it away. Two or three times he did this and the bear began to get angry. I stood a little distance up the road and watched him. The next time he offered the apple, the bear sprang at it, and ----. Have you ever seen the starting of a race by the firing of a pistol - BANG- a dash forward and then on for all you are worth? Well it was like that. As the bear sprang forward the chain, which had so often pulled him up, snapped with a bang. The lanky long-legged groom, well built for a race, dashed off like one possessed, with terror in his face. With one bound he was over the fence and off up the road to the stables at such a pace that all records I am sure were broken and there was I in the road petrified almost for a moment. "Come on boy, back to the gardens," called the groom and back I went as fast as I could run. Oh! Shall I ever forget it, my legs seemed like lead, and my movements hampered with heavy boots. Nearer and nearer came the bear, I raced on for the garden gates. Should I get there in time?

No one else was in sight to help and that bear was quickly gaining on me. How he seemed to hurl himself forward in a peculiar shamle and shuffle. It was like a dreadful nightmare. At last the gates! I threw myself upon the handles and opened them and dashed inside, banging the gates to as the bear ran by. I was safe! How my young legs trembled as I stood panting against the gates, leaving the bear growling outside and then again making off after the groom who, however, had found sanctuary in the stables.

Of course a hue and cry was raised, the Bailiff was soon on the track of the bear, which he eventually caught and led home again quite docile. This little escapade seemed rather to please the bear, who no doubt found life a little monotonous and I think from that time on he lived in the hope of again distinguishing himself. As no opportunity turned up he thought it was time to make one. So one night he again broke his chain and after wandering about, got into the paddock where the cows were and together they had quite an exciting time. He was again caught and a stronger chain provided. Once again his longing for companionship and fresh fields of adventure was crushed. But fortune in the shape of Daniel Cripps favoured him one night. Now Daniel was a man who lived in a village much further away, but this particular day of which I am writing was the day of the Annual Flower Show. Daniel was a great gardener and he had successfully exhibited that day. Now I am sorry to have to relate that he was also at times a great tippler and such an occasion could only be celebrated in his usual way. So that by the end of the day Daniel did not know whether it was potatoes or cabbage for which he got first prize. Neither did he know when he had had enough and he finished the day at the pub near the Park. It was getting near midnight when he at last started for home. Now there were two paths converging together at the East end of the Park and gradually widening apart to a distance of half a mile. Daniel should have taken the left but he took the right, which was wrong. But in his muddled state he did not notice where he was going and so he stumbled along. Now this path led into the road near where the bear dwelt. Presently Daniel drew near, all unconscious of the presence of the bear until he was rudely awakened by the growling and clanking of his chain. Then the form of the bear appeared standing up on his hind legs and beating the air with his paws. Daniel now realised that he had made a great mistake in more ways than one. To get out of this danger was his first thought and he rushed blindly for the road towards the Bailiff's house. Across the road he stumbled till brought up by a high iron fence. Over this he clambered in his frenzy and dropped down on the other side. But alas for Daniel, the fence enclosed a pond on that side of the road in front of the Bailiff's house and the sides of the pond sloped down to the water and were smooth concrete.

So Daniel escaped one trouble for another. Splash! into the water he went and there he floundered trying to get out, but unable to do so, partly because of his condition and partly because of the smooth sloping sides of the pond. You can well imagine the scene. His loud cry for help eventually brought the Bailiff, who was astonished to find what had happened. So he helped out a very wet and much bedraggled, also I trust a more sober Daniel than when he went in.

The bear was now enjoying life to the full, but time will not permit for more stories. Suffice it to say that he grew so strong and venturesome that it was decided to find a more suitable place for him and he was presented to the Zoological Gardens. It was my privilege to see him there some two years later. I spoke kindly to him, in fact in a most delightfully exciting manner for I was pleased to see him. I reminded him of our former friendship, of our great race together, but he was most indifferent and I realised that he had quite forgotten me and that to him I was just one of a crowd who might offer him a bun. How sad it all seemed. I came away quite distressed. I could hardly bear it.

A country lad

Keith Armstrong explains the background to the story.

This story was written by my grandfather, Harry Armstrong, and records events in his early working life at Oakley Hall. in about 1885.

He probably left school at ten years of age (in 1881) as that was the leaving age at that time. At some stage he went to work for Joices' (coach builders) in Basingstoke. This was probably early in 1887, soon after his father died on 19th December 1886 at the early age of 46. The family must have moved back into Basingstoke around that time, perhaps having lost a tied cottage near Oakley Hall. Harry married my grandmother in 1892 just before he was 21. He is in the 1891 census at Staines, having moved there when Joices bought Luxfords He and his brother John Wells Armstrong both lodged at the same house in Staines and both worked as coach fitters for a while..



Later, my grandfather lived in Ashford, Middx. I saw a copy of the Wesley Guild minutes for the Methodist Church there from 1919 to 1943 and found that he was Devotional President several times during that period. He probably read this story as a talk for the Guild around 1920. He also ran a Boys' Bible Class for many years and played a musical instrument. He died in 1937.

Hillsea College was evacuated from Portsmouth to Oakley Hall during WW2, until the hall was sold as a care home. Now the care home has moved to a new building next door and Oakley Hall itself is a conference and functions centre and hotel. It is Grade II listed, with 315 acres of gardens and rural land.

Note by Barbara Applin

I went to Oakley Hall with Keith and his wife Dulcie , hoping to trace places mentioned in the story. The manager and reception staff were most helpful and pointed us in the direction of Chris Tasker, the gardener, who had much to tell us, and has offered to let us copy some documents he has.

The drive has been moved and the Clock Tower and Coach House are being converted to hotel rooms, but the frontage is still imposing.



Much work is being done on the extensive grounds and there are

plans to reinstate the sunken garden and possibly to replant the walled garden, whose gate is now sheathed in wire. We weren't able to identify the carpenters' workshops, and the duck pond has been filled in.



We hope to tell you more about Oakley Hall in the next Newsletter.

Human Remains Workshop

Nicola Turton

I've been fascinated by remains such as bones since I was a toddler, and in our local museum would stare for a worryingly long time at the skeletons from a local Mortimer Wheeler dig. So I was keen to have a go at the Human Remains Workshop that was recently run by the University of Winchester and the Hampshire Field Club.

The workshop began with a very comprehensive lecture, given by Katie Tucker, covering just about all you could die or suffer from and what mark it might leave on your remains. This took the best part of an hour and a half and you will forgive me for noting only the most salient (memorable) points.. For instance, the sutures on your skull were long thought to indicate the age of the individual, but it is now known that sometimes they never close. Some people have an unclosed suture that runs down their forehead and between their eyes. But the only outward suggestion of this can be eyes that are fractionally wider apart than usual.

The lecture went at speed through types of burials: prone, crouch, coffin, excarnation then chambered tomb, bog... (I'm sure you can think of more), and also the types of mummification (natural and man-made). The lecturer touched on tissue preservation, on the marks left on bones from sickness or injury, or from lifestyle. Most famously, of course, there are the planes on ankle bones made when women squat to grind grain for flour, but there are also the shoulder changes caused by use of a long-bow, and even the groove worn in teeth from prolonged use of a clay pipe.

Katie also covered the pathologies of TB, smallpox and other nasties; however, everyone kept their breakfast down, and went keenly off for the coffee break.

When we returned, there were large cardboard boxes on our tables, and we were given the choice of gloving up. Alan did but I didn't as the gloves make my hands feel horrid and make my rings go dull (and there's nothing worse than a dirty diamond, as my mother would say).

Our box contained a Roman woman in her late 30s and only a little shorter than me, so I felt empathy with her (though by the time you read this I will no longer be in *my* late 30s). I articulated her hands, ribs and spine, which were all quite complicated parts, but very rewarding. At one point I had several of her vertebrae threaded on my finger and did consider how odd that was. Her phalanges - the tips of her fingers - were so tiny, like delicate flanged arrow-heads, and when I gently laid my hand over hers, it was quite poignant.

It was unclear how our lady had died. The fineness of her fingertips could suggest the beginnings of leprosy, but there were no other symptoms. Most of her face was missing, but that was probably post-mortem. And, sadly, her teeth kept falling out of her bottom jaw, which was slightly distressing.

Some of the participants spent time on the data sheets, noting skeletal vital statistics, but I'm afraid I can tell you little of that as I concentrated on the bones. The table to the right of us had a Roman man, and it was clear how he had died. His top vertebrae had been shattered when he was decapitated, but his lower jaw also showed violence. The teeth on one side had been cleanly cut away from the jaw by another strike from an edged weapon, which made us all wince a little.

The third skeleton was a very tall, thickset man, who took the grace out of gracile (anthropology joke there). He was a mediaeval man who had suffered from leprosy. One of the most notable things was his right leg which had an ulcer on it. The bone growth looked like a large, feathery pine cone stuck on his shin.

It was a most rewarding morning and I strongly urge you to sign up for the next one if you are a member of the Hampshire Field Club (if not, then join up; it's a really interesting society).

But one of the best bits of the day was to yet to come. Later in Winchester, we bought a new door mat in Past Times and, once at the till, the rather anodyne young man tritely said, 'And have you had a nice day so far?' 'Yes,' said Alan, 'we've spent the morning assembling the skeleton of a Roman woman from Winchester.' That was *so* far from any response he'd ever had before that he was rendered speechless. 'Oh!' was about all he could muster! It was worth it for that moment alone.

BOOKSHELF



Review by Peter Stone

Europe's Tragedy: A History of the Thirty Years War – Peter H Wilson

996 pp Allen Lane- Penguin Books 2009 £35

In this latest history of civil war within the Holy Roman Empire between 1618 and 1648 Peter H Wilson, Professor G F Grant Professor of History at the University of Hull, deals with an event whose importance is given little attention in British history (*The Oxford History of England*, for instance, makes just four references to it and one of these is indirect.)

In 1618 the Holy Roman Empire covered a large area of central Europe north to south from the Baltic to Italy and west to east from the Netherlands to Poland and most of the territory of modern Federal Germany. It contained an astonishing array of kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities and free cities organised hierarchically into a loose confederation which acknowledged the overall supremacy of the Austrian Hapsburg Emperor who however exercised direct control over Hapsburg lands within it.

Since the Peace of Augsburg 1555, which had ended the Wars of Religion, a Catholic Hapsburg Emperor had been recognised with limited and varied power over a territory that included a large

Protestant population that was itself further divided between Lutheran or Calvinist confessions. Sometimes Catholic princes ruled over Protestant populations and sometimes *vice versa*. Religious differences were always a potential danger to its stability. In particular, there existed different interpretations of the Augsburg peace, especially over the question of Catholic Church lands taken over by Protestant rulers.

Matters came to a head when the Protestant aristocracy in Bohemia, feeling threatened by the forces of the Counter Reformation, refused to accept the succession of the Jesuit-influenced Emperor Ferdinand II as their king. Ferdinand crushed the subsequent rebellion at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, near Prague in the modern Czech Republic, and imposed a savage Catholic settlement.

Warfare might have ended then but for the rash acceptance of the Bohemian Crown by Frederick V Elector Palatine (who was the son-in-law of James I) and the ambitions of Maximilian of Bavaria which were instrumental in widening a difficult internal situation into a great war that came to involve at some stage or another all the powerful kingdoms of Europe including, from almost the beginning, the recently established Union of England and Scotland. Only Russia was not drawn into the conflict. No grand coalitions were formed by either side – every involvement was for narrow selfish purposes. Religion all too often thinly cloaked secular aims and it was for these reasons that peace was so difficult to achieve – there always seemed to be some advantage to someone for continuing with the war.

It has been estimated that perhaps as many as ten million, mostly non-combatant, lives were lost. Unlike 1914-18 there was extensive material damage over wide areas making the war comparable to that of 1939-45. Whole regions collapsed into lawlessness. Bands of marauders from ill-paid and often half starved armies of conscripts and mercenaries – some of the latter were described in a contemporary report as ‘men whom God does not want but the Devil is afraid of’ - committed crimes against persons and property at will and, it was claimed, even turned to cannibalism. The countryside was systematically plundered as a matter of policy to sustain the huge armies of both sides while the peasantry retaliated, when they had the opportunity, by killing any soldiers who became separated from their units. The plague and other diseases, along with famine, took far more lives than any of the great battles that were fought.

Twenty five years passed before serious negotiations aimed at a permanent settlement began but then took almost five more years to complete due to the entanglement of dynastic, political, and religious motives of the participants and widespread financial corruption.

As the author rightly concludes (perhaps hinting at present day wars) the history of the Thirty Years War warns ‘of the dangers of entrusting power to those who feel summoned by God to war or feel that their sense of justice and order is the only one valid’.

Are you surprised to discover that we were involved?

Well, Professor Wilson records that, over the duration of the war, 128000 English Scots and Welsh fought for the ‘Protestant Cause’ initially as ‘volunteers’ to support Frederick V but later with official support to put pressure on France or Spain as the occasion arose; some 43000 Irish enlisted with the Hapsburgs. He makes the point that ‘...British policy continued to swerve indecisively, responding to events with piecemeal, often ill-judged interventions...neither James I or Charles I after 1625 managed to reconcile the tension between confessional aspirations and political realities...’. The efforts of the Stuart Monarchy, which included supporting Frederick V and his court in exile, increased crown debt by almost 150% from 1625 to 1632 and yet they ‘...had negligible diplomatic effect and brought no strategic gains...’

These passages throw an interesting light on the financial pressure exerted on the Stuart monarchy through its own policies that led eventually to disputes with Parliament and the outbreak of civil war from 1641, at which point most soldiers from Britain returned home.

Equally interesting is the fact that the principal causes of the Thirty Years War – disputed monarchical powers within post-medieval sovereignties and the baleful effects of religious dissension on the politics in the 17th century – are strikingly similar to those of the British Civil Wars of the 1640s.

This is a fine book which explains with great clarity a period which might fairly be described as the first great European war. Its ending by the Peace of Westphalia 1648 had far-reaching consequences that continue to influence the course of European history to the present day.

There is just one quibble: although the battlefield sketch maps provide excellent support for the text, the map of the Holy Roman Empire contains far too much detail and cannot easily be related to the movements of the armies as described and I therefore found myself making cross-references to another work containing simplified sketch maps in order to grasp the vast sweep of the major campaigns.

HAMPSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

*Extracted from HFC Newsletter No 53, Spring 2010
by kind permission of the editor*

Until 2003 Hampshire County Council published an Annual Report of Archaeology in Hampshire. The first volume, for 1976, was published in 1977 and for over a quarter of a century it was a valuable resource, bringing together summaries of archaeological work carried out in a particular year, whether by professional organisation, academic institution or local society. Knowledge was easily and conveniently available to all interested parties. The final report was published in 2004. The absence of a summary covering the years 2004-07 was felt throughout the county's archaeological community and it was logical that the Hampshire Field Club, as the pre-eminent association for the study of the county's past, should become involved in producing a new series of reports. There is now a round-up of the "missing" years, and for 2008 onwards the report will be published annually in electronic format (i.e. a PDF document) to provide a convenient and cost-effective solution. It also offers the option of printing only what is required.

There are now four years' (2004-2007) reports on the HFC web site. Each one closely follows the format established for the previous series of reports. Each is organised by District and then alphabetically by location. Individual entries consist of a location that includes a grid reference. This is followed by an identifier, usually a Site UID, which links it to a record held in the AHBR database. The records for Southampton, Portsmouth and Winchester have also provided information about work carried out in these cities, and identifiers that relate to their respective data bases are given. It is through the identifier that further information about a particular project can be acquired. Where a project has already been published a full bibliographic reference is provided. In addition to archaeological fieldwork each report includes records of building surveys. Survey projects that encompass large numbers of sites, for example by the Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology or Berkshire Archaeological Surveys, are included, although it has not been possible to provide details of individual projects.

Hampshire County Council Museums Service have for many years offered an identification service for the general public and a list of finds from the various museums in the county was included in the Annual Report. The lists for the years 2004-07 have been included under their respective years. A number of local societies already publish a selection of the finds recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database for their county. There has not however been a regular publication of PAS finds from Hampshire. Rob Webley, the Finds Liaison Officer for Hampshire, has kindly agreed to compile a selection for each year showcasing some of the most interesting and important finds. These range in date from prehistory through to late medieval times and include a variety of different materials.

The data for each year was assembled and edited by Nick Stoodley, with the help of a wide range of people. Reports can be found at <http://fieldclub.hants.org.uk/hants-archaeology-report.html>

2010 DIARY DATES

BAHSOC

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEETING

*Thurs 10th June at 7.30 pm Church Cottage, Basingstoke
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and Members' Talks*

VISITS

*Oxford, Saturday 26th June (see page 2)
Silchester Thurs 29 July 6 for 6.30 pm (see page 2)*

FIELDWORK

*Basing House dig, 24 May-4 June (see pages 2 and 3)
Excavation at Kimpton, late August or early September (see page 3)*

Secretary: Ginny Pringle Tel: 01420 550028
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www.bahsoc.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 1000263

BASING HOUSE

Saturday, Sunday, Monday, 28th-30th August Sealed Knot and Living History (see page 2)

FRIENDS OF WILLIS MUSEUM at 7.30 pm Willis Museum, Basingstoke

*Thurs 20th May Updating the Victoria County History for North Hampshire Dr Jean Morrin
Thurs 1st June The work of the Wessex Film & Sound Archive David Lee
Thurs 15th July The Basing Raised Work Embroidery Ruth Smith*

HAMPSHIRE FIELD CLUB www.fieldclub.hants.org

*Sat 22 May 125th Anniversary Conference 1.30 - 7 pm
Sun 4 July 125th Anniversary Field Visit
Sun 11 July Basingstoke visit, Landscape Section 10 am -12.30.
Meet at St Michael's Church
Sat 24th July Outing to Emsworth & Warblington Local History Section*

We can send one of our paid-up members to HFC events..Contact Ginny Pringle..

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY MUSEUM SERVICE STORES SUNDAYS

*At Chilcomb House, Bar End, Winchester, 10.0 0am to 5.00 pm
April 25th, May 16th, June 20th, No July, August 15th, September 19th,
October 17th, November 21st, December 12th*

Contact: Alan Jacobs on 01962-826728 or alan.jacobs@hants.gov.uk