

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BAHS

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Reminder: Subs due 1st September! See page 16



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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 14th June 2012

Warm thanks were given to Secretary, Margaret Porter who retired from the Committee, Mark Peryer who retired as Chairman to become Treasurer and Ginny Pringle who retired as Secretary to take up the role of Chairperson. Barry Hedger continues as Membership Secretary and Barbara Applin, Marjolein Butler, Mary Oliver (co-opted), Alan Turton and Ian Waite remain committee members. Newly elected members are Ian Williams and Penny Martin, who takes up the role of Secretary.

Membership subscriptions remain the same as last year. The committee urged more members to take advantage of the standing order scheme to renew their membership, as this helps to keep membership administration to a minimum. Members are also requested to complete a Gift Aid Form, if they have not already done so, when renewing their membership subscription this year as this enables the Society to claim money back from the Inland Revenue.

After the AGM a presentation was given by Tim Schadla Hall on Basingstoke Archaeology and the Public.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS!

Ian Williams I have a BA in History & Social Sciences, and am still interested in history, mainly modern, military, British history. I am a collector of and researcher into - stuff. I am keen on birds - particularly raptors - and on flying. I am Chairman of the Basingstoke Heritage Society and Vice- Chairman of the Friends of the Willis Museum, and spend my "spare" time on my allotment.



Penny Martin I joined BAHS around 6/7 years ago after studying Archaeology at BCOT and have lived in Basingstoke for over 40 years, although my roots are in London. I have always been interested in history and Time Team turned me on to Archaeology. I like the hands on aspect of Archaeology, in particular the Prehistoric period and have been part of long term excavations on Yateley Common which focus on the Mesolithic. The investigative and methodical approach to history through material remains appeals to me, being able to create my own theory of the past based on the evidence. I enjoy nothing better than sitting in a hole in the ground with my trowel in the middle of nowhere with my daughter and grandchildren, or visiting sites at home or abroad.

Avebury Landscape Walk – 13th October

The Avebury Landscape - Silbury Hill with West Kennet Long Barrow

On Saturday 13th October, Mark Peryer will be leading a walk around the landscape of the Avebury area. The walk will start off from the car park in Avebury village at 10:00 and start with a visit to Avebury ring and the traces of the avenue, before making for West Kennett Long Barrow and Silbury Hill and then returning to Avebury for lunch. In the afternoon there will be a visit to the barrows and hill fort at Windmill hill. Overall, the walk will cover a distance of about 8 miles, but with the exception of Windmill Hill will be mostly on the level. If you would like to join Mark, please contact him by email (mperyer@f2s.com) and he will let you know further details.



LECTURE PROGRAMME NOTES 2012-2013

2012

13 September Constantinople - Imperial capital of the Byzantine Empire

Kay Ainsworth, former Keeper of Archaeology, Hampshire Museum Service

Kay is well-known to most of us, either from running our volunteer work at Chilcomb, sharing our Society holidays, or chairing the Archaeology Section of the Hampshire Field Club. It will be a real pleasure to welcome her back as lecturer to start our next programme, talking about one of her favourite subjects, late Roman civilisation in a beautiful foreign city.

11 October Exploring a legionary fortress; recent research at Caerleon

Andrew Gardner, lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, London

Last year on our Society trip to Pembrokeshire, we had a most interesting tour of Caerleon, giving us a special interest in this talk. The dig was not taking place at that time, but the discoveries over the last few years have hit the archaeological headlines and, as one of the Directors, Andrew is well placed to tell us all about them. Who said the Romans were boring!

8 November Putting flesh on the bones; the human skeleton in archaeology and forensic science

Dr Martin Smith . University of Bournemouth

Human remains, and their treatment, have been very much in the news in recent times, but tonight's specialist will demonstrate how much can be learned from skeletons, and the importance of excavating and curating them properly. Martin has made a special study of Neolithic skeletons, and will be sharing his research with us.

13 December Christmas Party

2013

10 January The effects of the railways upon Winchester 1830-1900

Dr Mark Allen

Those members involved in research for the VCH project will already have met Mark, from the History Department at Winchester University. His lecture on how the coming of the railway changed our county town will be of particular interest to historians of Basingstoke where the railway had a similar transforming effect. And I think trains are always popular...

14 February Gold and silver in England in the centuries after the Staffordshire Hoard

Prof. David Hinton, University of Southampton

Last year we heard about the Staffordshire Hoard and a résumé of what has been learned from it so far. This year, in a welcome return, David will continue the story of precious items and what they can say about early medieval society. Many will know his books and articles on this period, or have dug with him at Kingsclere. Expect lots of beautiful items to illustrate this lecture!

14 March The origin of our species

Prof. Chris Stringer, Natural History Museum

Some years ago, we were fortunate to have a lecture from Chris on Neanderthal Man and recent progress in primate research. Things have moved on since then, and this lecture will be an excellent opportunity to hear about current thinking on this important topic from one of the foremost experts in the field.

11 April Maritime archaeology in the Solent and the prehistoric settlement at Bouldner Cliff

Gary Momber, Hampshire and IOW Trust for Maritime Archaeology

The Solent and seas off Hampshire are some of the richest areas for maritime archaeology in the British Isles, not only for wrecks but also, because of the changes in sea level, for the preservation of buried landscapes. One of the Trust's most important sites is off the coast of the Isle of Wight at Bouldner Cliff where Mesolithic finds have been discovered. Because Mesolithic settlement sites are so rare on land, this underwater site has the potential to tell us a great deal.

9 May Excavations at Heathrow Terminal 5

Ken Welsh, Oxford Archaeology.

The excavations which preceded the building of Terminal 5 were truly tremendous, because of the huge area affected. Our speaker, one of the Directors, worked for Oxford Archaeology, but the project was too big for any one Unit, and Wessex Archaeology also fielded a team of diggers. Ken will give us a summary of the many sites which were discovered and explored as part of this massive project.

13 June AGM and Members' contributions

Fieldwork Report – July 2012

Mark Peryer (mperyer@f2s.com)

Jesus Hospital, Bray – May 26th

Martin Watson took the lead in organising a weekend dig to explore a midden at Jesus Hospital in Bray. The outcome of the work was that the midden had either been disturbed or it had been moved from somewhere else. The evidence for this was that we were finding pieces of the same object at different levels in the midden.

The finds were mainly glass and pottery and Martin has since cleaned up the intact glass bottles and has had them dated. He has also written up a report for the Jesus Hospital warden and will be returning the bottles for the small museum that has been started at the hospital. Martin's report appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

Survey Equipment Training Day – June 23rd

Ginny, Barry and Peter Stone took part in a day at Up Nately where I trained them on using a level, before showing them how to set up and use the Total Station. They transposed a benchmark from St Stephen's Church at Up Nately to a temporary benchmark on the Brickworks site. After this we worked through setting up the Total Station and took a series of measurements around the site using

the staff. The results have been downloaded from the Total Station and are being used to create a digitized site plan.

Holybourne Down Dig

The weather frustrated the good work that Ginny, in particular, had put into organising this dig and we had to make the decision to postpone the work until next year. This is unfortunate since we had around 20 people signed up to take part and we were disappointed to have to let them down.

The upside is that we have a plan in place that we can fairly easily roll out again and that we now have access to a large tent and a camping stove that we didn't have before.

We tried to set up some alternative project work during the same week, and this resulted in some work being done on the Up Nately Brickworks project and in getting the go-ahead to excavate a possible burnt mound.

Up Nately Brickworks

Over the weekend of the 21st – 23rd July a small party of dedicated excavators continued work at Up Nately Brickworks. The general idea was to try to tidy up and determine the outline of the structures on the site, as well as do some planning. That was not the way it turned out; as Jim Oram cleared an area which we thought was outside the floor plan of the building we uncovered more structures about 30 cm under the ground surface. The remaining brick pier that we thought was only a couple hours of excavation away from being fully revealed took the combined efforts of Neil Forde and Mark Beauchamp two days to dig out and was found to be connected to the other structures.



Jim digs in



Martin planning, whilst Neil and Mark try to find the end of the pier

Meanwhile, Ginny Pringle and Martin Watson drew up a detailed plan of the piers on which we think the works steam engine was bedded and several others helped me capture the co-ordinates of the various structures using the Total Station. The story will continue with further weekend excavations.

Hogdigging Copse Report

Thank you to Peter Stone who has now completed the report on our woodland survey of Hogdigging Copse. Peter's reward will be to get started on the next woodland survey report.

Burnt Mound at Greywell Moors

We have followed up an enquiry Ginny received concerning a potential burnt mound on Greywell Moors, a nature reserve to the east of Greywell which is looked after by the Hampshire and Isle of

Wight Wildlife Trust. The Moors is a rare area of lowland Fen and has numerous springs which feed the river Whitewater. The site in question has a scatter of burnt flint, is raised above the fenland and is next to a spring. The Trust and Natural England are keen for us to investigate it, but we shall have to wait until the end of September to ensure that we do not disturb any nesting birds or breeding insects. If it is a burnt mound then it will most likely date from the Bronze Age and the objective of our investigation will be to confirm what it is, and hopefully find some dating evidence.

If all goes according to plan we expect to arrange an excavation in October, more details will be announced at the September meeting. If you would like to take part, please let me know.

Jesus Hospital, Bray. 17th Century Almshouse

Excavating the midden 25th/26th May 2012 Summary Report

Martin Watson

Taking part Don Bell, Tony Wiltshire, Martin Watson, Mark Peryer, Ginny Pringle, and Alan and Nicola Turton, with additional help from Isabelle and Abigail, granddaughters of Jim and Betty Jackson, wardens of Jesus Hospital, and from Barry Hedger, who supplied the ice creams on a very hot afternoon.



History

The almshouse was built in 1627 on the outskirts of Bray, from an endowment of William Goddard, to house 34 local pensioners and six from the Fishmongers' Guild, of which William Goddard was a member. It comprises a quadrangle of linked houses, and is now managed by The Donnington Hospital Trust. The midden is in a wooded area about 135 m west of the building and covers an ill-defined area 15 x 20 m.

Objectives

The objectives of the project were to establish whether the midden was the same date as the almshouse and to discover some artefacts of everyday life in the almshouse in years gone by, for the almshouse museum.

The dig

A 5 x 2m trench was opened in the western end of the midden. The trench ran from the woodland ground level over a high point of about a metre. It was taken down in three stages to the ground level. The whole surface area was littered with broken bottles and crockery and the excavation revealed a large quantity of bottles and more crockery – mostly broken but with some whole bottles, including a gin bottle from “The Load of Hay”, a London pub which still operates today. The distribution of the bottles and the crockery seemed to be quite random, with no definite evidence of stratification by date. Two fragments of 18th C bottle bases were found in the surface spread but most of the artefacts dated from the late 19th C to early 20th C. At the end of the dig, most of the broken bottles and crockery were reburied in the trench. Any conclusions have to be tempered by the limited scope of our investigation in both time and area covered. However, the dates



of the majority of the bottles suggest that the midden was mainly deposited in the early 20th C and the random distribution of material suggests it may have been moved from elsewhere. Some interesting bottles were found for the almshouse museum, and, of course, we hope that an older midden may still remain somewhere on the site to be discovered sometime in the future.

Our thanks go to the Donnington Hospital Trust and their staff for giving us permission and encouraging us in our investigation, particularly the Jesus Hospital wardens, Jim and Betty Jackson. Thanks also to George and Anita Plummer, members of the Alton Bottle Club, with their invaluable assistance in dating the bottles.

BASINGSTOKE TALKING HISTORY and *THE LAUNCH*

Barbara Applin

As you can imagine, we haven't had much chance to do interviews recently, being occupied with the Co-op book, but Cathy Williams has been recording her own memories and we hope to start other interviews soon.

Many heartfelt thanks to the Committee for supporting the Co-op book and helping with the Launch. We're getting lots of compliments on the book, which is taking off nicely. Here's one, simply on seeing the flyer (thanks, Mark!)

Thanks for the pdf – the book looks handsome, and at that price will buy one when I next visit Milestones. John Winckler

Jo Kelly, Barbara Large and I had a stand at The Southern Co-operative convention in Bournemouth and we sent two copies of the book to The Southern Co-operative, hoping to have a piece about it in their Magazine.

The Launch of the book was very enjoyable. Jo Kelly, Barbara Large, Anita Plummer and many other members did a great job in organising the food and putting up bunting etc. The bunting with Co-op logos was made by Nicola Turton, whose magnum opus, of course, was the cake in the form of a Co-op token.



The Deputy Mayor, assisted by the Deputy Mayoress, cut the cake with Alan Turton's sword.

Margaret Porter was amusing and lively, as she conducted the auction of

some of the original artwork by Alan Turton and Anita Leatherby (Plummer). This raised £97.00!! We have asked for this money, and donations (the odd 5p change people refuse, as well as money for sales of produce at meetings) to go into a Book fund which might help to make costings on a future book a bit easier.



Because costings were tight, to keep the published price under £10, the Members' price of £8.95 was supposed to finish after the Launch but the Committee have decided to extend a special price for members from now on at £9.50.

Waterstones gave us a signing session and, with a few reminders, keep ordering more, while the Willis Museum and Milestones have reordered too. The Discovery Centre adventurously took two copies on sale or return and have sold one, I believe, but the Hampshire Library Service did buy copies for various libraries. Do carry on telling all your friends about this book and let us know of any other possible outlets.

Sales to date (3rd August) 244.

We have sent review copies to *The Local Historian*, *Southern History* and the Hampshire Field Club. We also sent one to the Hampshire Record Office, and it looks good on their shelf of new books in the Search Room. David Rymill has asked me to write an article on how we did it for the Hampshire Archives Trust Newsletter, and said,

Thank you very much for the copy of The Co-op and Basingstoke - it tells a most interesting story and it's very attractively-produced. I'm impressed too that you have kept the price so reasonable despite the colour printing.

I'm writing thank-you letters to the many people I consulted when trying to find the copyright holder for the autobiography of Winifred Griffiths, and have received this from Swansea Libraries:

Thank you for your email – I'm glad to hear that your endeavours have finally come to fruition! The book looks very interesting and I can see a lot of hard work has gone into the project, so I wish you every success with the publication.

Claire Tranter , Librarian: Information Services

Having the illustrations on computer, I am hoping to work up a Powerpoint presentation about how we did the book so that it can be a "stopgap" offered if we or any other local society find a speaker doesn't turn up.

We also want to make good use of all the research our team did in ploughing through back numbers of the Gazette (over 100 years!) Barbara Large took photos of any reports, illustrations, adverts etc we found interesting, so we are offering photos of adverts to HATADS, an archive of advertisements, once we have made a catalogue of them.

It seemed foolish, when doing that research, only to pick out anything about the Co-op, so we also have a much larger series of photos on many other themes, and I'd be glad of any suggestions of bodies who might find them useful. Colleges or universities running courses on journalism? It is fascinating to see the changing styles of reporting over time. What organisations study the changing role of women? That's certainly a subject that crops up over the years. Ideas and contacts, please! Non-Co-op items are also being used in research for the revision of the Basingstoke volume of the Victoria County History, especially for the Economic History section. Both The Southern Co-operative and *The Gazette* (as well as Barbara Large, who took the photos) have given permission for these archives to be passed on to appropriate bodies, though cataloguing them will be quite a long job.

Putting this book together has been a great example of team work, using various skills – research, proof-reading, artwork, photography (and George Plummer's amazing work using Photoshop). As well as providing much of the raw material through interviews, the BTH team have commented on many drafts, suggesting useful improvements. Then the Publications Sub-Committee came up with further ideas, particularly on the costings for submission to the main Committee.

Thank you, everybody!

BAHS VISIT TO WILTSHIRE

Clive Hawes

Saturday, 5th May 2012 saw an intrepid party cross the borders into Wiltshire for an absorbing day in and around Devizes.

We met up in a chilly but dry car park at Crofton, Great Bedwyn, to start our day with a look at the Pumping Engines. Crofton is situated some 450 feet above sea level and the Kennet and Avon canal has to rise significantly to cross the hills. The purpose of the pumps was to lift water from a culvert and well at the lower level of the canal into a feeder that leads to the canal summit, thus replacing that lost due to boat traffic passing through the locks.

On arrival at the Grade 1 listed building, we were treated to a detailed introduction by Mr Jon Willis, who outlined how, in the original planning, a canal tunnel was discounted since the alternative (a series of locks and steam-driven water pumps) would save some £41000. During the special steam days, the modern electric pumps are switched off.



This establishment dates from 1807 and one of the reasons for this site being chosen was the availability of freshwater springs. It was also explained how the various engines were developed and changes made over the years as new ideas assisted in considerable savings in coal usage. The 1812 Boulton and Watt is stated as being the oldest working steam engine in the world. An additional service was to provide a supply to the nearby Savernake Station water troughs for the locomotives. Further details were explained, covering the working life of the engines, leading to closure and, finally, restoration. Here came an unexpected local connection as among the volunteers over the years were the St Thomas (Worting) Scout group who assisted in the cleaning and painting of the external parts of the boilers. This year, Crofton will be celebrating the 200th anniversary of the engine and will, hopefully, be receiving a coal delivery by barge.

Steam is generated by two Lancashire type boilers. These bear the name of *Great Western Railway, Makers Swindon Works*. Both engines were steamed whilst we were there; the second is a Cornish engine, by Harveys of Hayle, dating from 1846. The Cornish had great experience of steam engines and pumping but the methods and modifications they developed could not be installed until the original Boulton and Watt patents expired. The engines now work on the Trevithick Cornish cycle, using approximately one-third of the fuel used by the Watt engine. (Coal consumption was measured in pounds per horsepower-hour).

The engines perform about 10 strokes per minute, lifting about 1 ton per stroke, thus 600 tons per hour, or 1,344,000 gallons.

There was also a selection of stationary engines, all on steam, including a Sunderland Forge generator from 1924, designed for lighting and power on a trawler.

This is, of course, living history that you can see, hear and touch. As Mark Peryer said, 'It's in your face'. I thought that was a very good summary. I consider it also to be a work of art. It's big, complex and heavy, far removed from the concept of portable antiquities, but a wonderful example of industrial development and progress. Also it shows a time-slice of what could be done with materials and tooling that were, for their time, quite advanced.

Further, we saw examples of Watt's parallel linkage, an apparently simple arrangement for keeping various linkages in line. How old-fashioned is this? Well, a variation of that linkage can be found beneath many modern cars, keeping the rear axle under control, making for safe and comfortable handling and cornering.

One thing is obvious, that the supply of coal from Somerset could of course be made via the canals, at least until the GWR takeover. We understand that consumption of coal at Crofton is about 1.25 tons per day. These days, the coal comes from the Midlands.

The use of water transport would also apply to other heavy materials and components. The very first engine at Crofton had a wooden beam, no doubt delivered by road or track. Later, when the canal was open it became possible to deliver major cast iron items by barge.

We went on to visit Devizes Museum, a real treasure house.

OUR VISIT TO MINLEY MANOR

Cathy Williams

Nicola Turton, as a member of the Gibraltar Barracks Command Support Branch took us on a guided tour. The weather moved between damp and wet – which not even Nicola could control! We 14 gathered at the Fleet Lodge and entrance gate to the south-west of Minley Manor, and met the Padre. The Manor is an impressive building in the style of a French chateau.



Raikes Currie bought the land in 1846, at which time the manor was in a poor condition. He set about creating a new manor and estate. Henry Clutton designed a new house which was built between 1858 and 1860. Formal gardens around the house, a kitchen garden, and part of the pleasure grounds were laid out between 1861-4. Between 1884 and 1886 extensive additions to the estate were made by the architect George Devey. Messrs Veitch were employed to lay out a Winter Garden, The Plain, and extensions to the pleasure grounds in the 1880s and 1890s. New lodges, a water tower, and a new complex of walled gardens were created later.



Not only are the buildings, garden and park Listed, but also some notable interior rooms. It was quite embarrassing trailing in and out with wet shoes!

The grouping of the Italian Garden, the cloisters and the orangery is a beautiful wedding setting. We visited a very unusual circular thatched rustic summerhouse in the grounds, and then took a brisk walk through the "Listed grounds" to the water tower. This was built in 1906, of red brick with stone dressings, with a circular stair turret. It has a steeply pitched hipped roof with an octagonal lantern. Most unusual is the mosaic-effect finished brickwork inside the ground floor. Unfortunately, the building is in a poor state of repair.



One of the main features of the grounds is a 600 metre Wellingtonia tree avenue, shown off to good effect in the 1969 movie *Mosquito Squadron*, where the manor house played the part of a French château used as a prisoner of war camp and factory for the V-1 flying bomb. It was also used as a location in the 2007 Victorian fantasy movie *Stardust*, starring Robert De Niro and Michelle Pfeiffer.

St Andrews church at Minley Manor was consecrated in November 1870. It is a simple, pretty church, set a little aside from the main buildings. It is in use, and is a favourite wedding venue. A plaque on the wall records that the manor was used as a hospital during WW1 and that the colours hanging at the back of the church were the ones flown at the Manor. (A standard Red Cross Hospital Flag, much faded.) There is a wealth of colourful windows.



Since 1971 the Manor has been used as the Officers' Mess for Royal School of Military Engineering units at Gibraltar Barracks. A new Officers' Mess is due to open on the Barracks main site in January, so the future of the Manor is uncertain.

It was great to visit a local “hidden gem” on this MOD site, and our thanks go to Nicola for leading us around it and to the Padre, Maj. Richard Pluck.

Hampshire Field Club

VISIT TO BISHOPS WALTHAM PALACE

David Whiter

On June 9 a sizeable group gathered at Bishops Waltham for a visit memorable on two counts – it failed to rain (unlike most of May and June) and we were given a succinct explanation of the complex and fascinating history of the Bishop of Winchester’s Palace.

We met in the Crown Inn opposite, and Edward Roberts demonstrated its development from a fifteenth century hall house into the extended range of buildings exemplifying many periods, extensions and makeovers. Its most famous guest was the prisoner Admiral Villeneuve, losing admiral of the Battle of Trafalgar, who was given leave to attend the funeral of his opponent Nelson.

Then we moved to the Palace site. Winchester has always been one of the premier bishoprics since the Bishop received Waltham in 904 in exchange for Porchester castle, which went to the king. Its continuing importance is clear from the attendance of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at a convention there in 1522. John Hare, who has extensively investigated the site, traced the buildings from Henri de Blois’ initial chapel and hall through the defences thrown up in the Anarchy 1136 to 1154 and Henry II’s slighting of these defences. Henri de Blois was able to resume improvements after his return from exile. Later bishops including William of Wykeham and Henry Beaufort

contrived to extend the facilities skilfully on the constricted site. At the end of the fifteenth century Beaufort's long range of lodgings was improved, part now remaining as a museum and a reconstruction of the domestic style of the period.

After lunch Edward Roberts explored the context of the Palace, the town, the park and the sophisticated fishponds. We saw traces of the fishpond system in the delightful gardens of Palace House of Mr and Mrs Lovell, who provided a sumptuous tea to end a brilliant visit.

John Horrocks

Mary Oliver

We are sorry to tell you of the death of our long-standing member John Horrocks. Twenty years ago, when he and his family lived in Oakley, he served on the committee as Treasurer and then as Chairman. He was very active in promoting the Society; it was his idea to make the video 'Beneath Basingstoke' to share our interest with a wider public through the (then) most modern means of communication back in 1990. As well as being very hard work, it was also enormous fun and involved a good many Society members, including John, either in starring roles, or as gofers, refreshment providers etc. I have fond memories of recreating the Bronze Age feast for the Buckskin barrow scene, with John, his wife Chris and other members round a bonfire at Crabtree Plantation in the twilight one evening.



John was chairman during the celebration of our 25th birthday and presented Barbara and myself with our life membership scrolls for being founder members – with red and white roses as appropriate for our Yorkshire/Lancashire origins. He was also behind our annual dinners at BCOT, and was keen for us to have a full programme of events as well as lectures – one a month I seem to remember – quoting from his letter in the Newsletter when he became chairman 'we aim to be the very best at what we do and play a proactive role in the local community – to contribute to the public life of the Borough ... I see us as part missionaries, part explorers looking for knowledge' (Newsletter 124) It was great that he and Chris could join us last September for our 40th celebrations, and to give us a presentation on his memories of the Society. He had all his old spirit and enthusiasm, but was already not well. Sadly his condition did not react to treatment and he died on 6 July, with a memorial service on 13 July at Kirriemuir old parish church, of which he and Chris were faithful members. We extend our sincere sympathy to Chris and all the family at this sad time, and will remember our friend with affection and gratitude.



John going underground at The Vyne and with a Society group at a wet and wind-swept hillfort



***A Request for help
Down Grange House
Down Grange Farm
and Beechdown House***

If any member has any historical information, old photographs, or anecdotes about these buildings, Barry Hedger is very interested to hear from you, to help with the research he is undertaking. Please contact him at barry.hedger@btinternet.com, or 01256 329077.

OUR SOCIETY'S BRITTANY TRIP
Squeezing L'eau from Le Dictionnaire
Nicola Turton

You never know when you might need an alibi, but Tesco rather helpfully gave me one whilst we were on the ferry to Cherbourg. My phone buzzed, and the text read 'Welcome to Iceland'. Surprising, but as I say, you never know... Anyway, after a somewhat lumpy crossing, we took off into France, and experienced the first of incredibly impressive town walls, when we stopped at Saint-Lô for lunch. They also have a wonderful but sadly bombed cathedral, and rather cleverly, they have filled in the gaps with modern slate. Much better than the efforts at Coventry...

But as you might expect, it rained; in fact, there were times when we feared foot rot. One morning we drove to Mont St Michel, which was visible as a beautiful and ghostly silhouette in the distance. It wasn't actually so far away, but much curtailed by the appalling rain. We arrived and were greeted by a sight with which we were to become all too familiar; a Frenchman shamelessly having a pee *in the middle* of the car park. They never seem to seek a hedge or a little privacy, and being English, we pointed and shrieked with laughter.

As any of the group will tell you, the recent work done at Mont St Michel is not an improvement. Major work has to be done, as the causeway is making the bay silt up, so a bridge is planned, but the new car-park is about a mile from the causeway bus, and what a dismal, wet trudging mile it was, past tourist shops and doleful restaurants.

Having been disappointed by St Michael's Mount in Cornwall, I was astonished by the French version. It's so big, with winding mediaeval streets going up to the abbey at the summit. When we got to the abbey entrance, Alan said, 'Did you see the armoured gates?' 'No,' I replied, 'my head was down, and I was looking at the back of Ian's shoes.' The rain was so heavy it was almost comical, as if someone was standing just off camera and hurling buckets of water at us. I was grateful for having put on my walking boots, for my feet were the only dry things about me. My rucksack liner had been carefully left at home in my other rucksack, so everything was drenched. I could, and did, squeeze water from my French dictionary. The steep streets ran like a water feature. Yup, it was wet. But if it hadn't been, then we wouldn't have had the glorious contrast when we came out onto a terraced area, and the sun was out, gleaming on the sands of the bay in a miraculously beautiful way. Coming back down, I heard a French person say 'Oh, le deluge!' which tickled us. If you haven't been to Mont St Michel, do go – it's a very reasonable €9 to go round the abbey, but Alan and I would have paid €20, as it was so enjoyable. And I think we will all long remember the youth choir spontaneously singing plainsong in the chapel.

Brittany is such a lovely area of France. It's a mistake to think, as Alan and I have done, that all France is the bleak, flat country of the north, for in fact it was like driving through Somerset or Dorset, all lush green valleys and hills. And the towns are so pretty, with wonderful late mediaeval half-timbered buildings – we were ravished. That afternoon, some of us headed to a town called Dinan, where one timbered building had louvres and was painted in red-lead – oh my word – building porn.

Being into pre-history, I was so thrilled to see a lot of megalithic monuments. In fact we saw some 3000+. Although, to be fair, 3000 were all in one go, at Carnac, where there are rows and rows of stones. At one point we climbed a large, steep hill to the chapel on top, and it was only afterwards that I realised that the whole hill was a burial mound. I was in my own sort of heaven, though some of the group got stoned-out and repaired to cafés, crying 'Enough!' (light-weights!)

We went by boat to the island of Gavrinis, where the burial mound has a heavily decorated burial chamber, mostly swirls, but some axes, a bow and arrows and a pair of feet. I think they were Neolithic hippies. The guide said that one theory suggests the swirls are 'digital prints'. After a few moments, I realised she meant finger-prints.

Another passage grave was by a beach, and I was the first one in, and felt very intrepid, sloshing through the dark flooded chambers. I then made Alan come in too, and he moaned like mad. Especially when he got wet, then bashed his head on a low stone. Blood sacrifice! I could have searched out megalithic tombs for the entire holiday, but not everyone is quite so obsessive, and we did visit other places, such as Pegasus Bridge (which was taken by British paras on D-Day, but you know that). I said to Alan that the town looked just the way one thinks it should from the photos, and I was quite amazed, as often such places are vastly changed.

One day we went into the glorious city of Vannes. We'd been several times for dinner, but this time we had an appointment at the museum. Ian had 2 e-mails from the Director, who was quite definite that the museum opened at 10.30 am, and he was 'waiting' to see us. So we turned up and the gates were locked and the opening time was 2.30 pm. So Ian, Mark and I went off to Le Petit Mont, another burial mound some way away, whilst the rest of the group spent the morning in Vannes. When we got there, it was to find that in June, the site doesn't open until 2.30 pm. Bah!

The museum did open and was lovely. They do however, have far too many jade axes, and Margaret Porter and I plan to return one moonless night and liberate two of them.

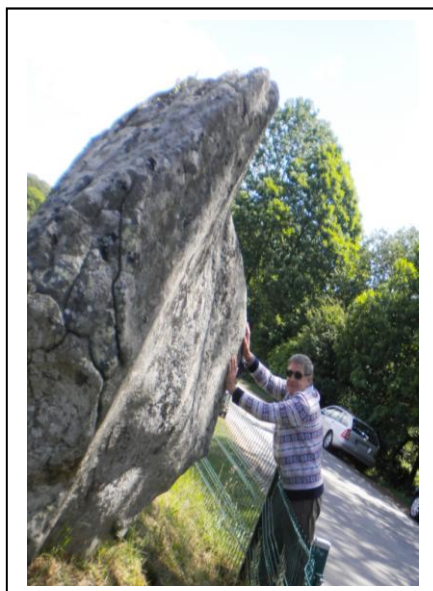
On the way home we also took in the Bayeux Tapestry. Obviously one is familiar with images from the famous **embroidery** (it's not a tapestry) but nothing prepares you for actually seeing it. One enters the darkened room where it is displayed in a huge horseshoe-shaped case, and I found it rather daunting at first. There are so many visitors and the information 'wands' are all chattering away in different languages, so it's a real Babel. To our great amusement, some visitors don't think to turn off their wand whilst they look at the pictures, and so zoom through at tremendous speed!

Then I looked at the embroidery, at this great 900- year-old treasure, and I was carried away. England is the longest occupied country in the world, and this is the terrible story of the start of this occupation. I was profoundly moved and by the end, deeply upset. I wondered, quite loudly, if the UN could intervene, and if I could get a t-shirt that said 'Normans GO HOME', and I stopped speaking in French to people and reverted to being a loud English person. Oh dear. It was clearly time to go home.

This is only the short version of our brilliant trip, which was full of laughter and learning and wonderful French bread (oh boy, the bread!) Come with us next time and get the whole story.

PHOTO PAGE – THE SOCIETY’S BRITTANY TRIP

Members’ photos -a prize
for the best captions!



*Man's struggle to
control his environment*



2012-13 DIARY DATES

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY *MEETINGS on Thursdays at 7.30 pm Church Cottage, Basingstoke*

**Secretary: Penny Martin Tel: 01256
321423**

www.bahsoc.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 11000263

<i>Thurs 13 September</i>	CONSTANTINOPLE – IMPERIAL CAPITAL OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE <i>Kay Ainsworth</i>
<i>Thurs 11 October</i>	EXPLORING A LEGIONARY FORTRESS: RECENT RESEARCH AT CAERLEON <i>Andrew Gardner</i>
<i>Sat 13 October</i>	AVEBURY LANDSCAPE WALK <i>see page 2</i>
<i>Thurs 8 November</i>	PUTTING FLESH ON THE BONES: THE HUMAN SKELETON IN ARCHAEOLOGY AND FORENSIC SCIENCE <i>Dr Martin Smith</i>
<i>Thurs 13 December</i>	Christmas Party
<i>Thurs 10 January</i>	THE EFFECTS OF THE RAILWAYS UPON WINCHESTER 1830-1900 <i>Dr Mark Allen</i>

FRIENDS OF BASING HOUSE at 7.30 pm, Basing House Education Centre, The Street, Old Basing

<i>Tues 9 October</i>	GRUB STREET TO FLEET STREET <i>Bob Clarke</i>
<i>Tues 13 November</i>	AGM
<i>Tues 8 January</i>	PRE-DEVELOPMENT BASINGSTOKE <i>Bob Applin</i>

FRIENDS OF WILLIS MUSEUM at 7.30 pm Willis Museum, Basingstoke

<i>Thurs 20 September</i>	EMPRESS EUGENIE IN EXILE <i>Diana White</i>
<i>Thurs 18 October</i>	AGM and MEMORIES OF KEMPSHOTT <i>Owen Blissett</i>
<i>Thurs 15 November</i>	FOOD IN ROMAN BRITAIN <i>Sally Grainger</i>

HAMPSHIRE FIELD CLUB www.fieldclub.hants.org

<i>Sat 22 September</i>	Visit to Mottisfont Abbey and Church
<i>Sat 6 October</i>	Local History Section AGM and visit to Lyndhurst
<i>Sat 27 October</i>	Landscape Section AGM and Waterways in the Landscape conference (Hampshire Record Office)

Membership Renewal *Membership subs are unchanged from last year.*

If you already pay by standing order you do not need to fill in a membership renewal form unless there has been a change in your address or tax status for Gift Aid. If you do not, then please complete the form and send it with your cheque to Barry Hedger, 23 Osprey Rd, Basingstoke RG22 5PR. If you wish to change to the convenience of a standing order, then please get a Standing Order form from your bank and fill in the details for the BAHS account (Account number 00932097, sort code 30-90-53), making the SO payable yearly on 1st September.

Membership	Paid by standing order	Paid otherwise
Individual	£11	£12
Family (same household)	£15	£16
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Over 60 Family	£12	£13