

# BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

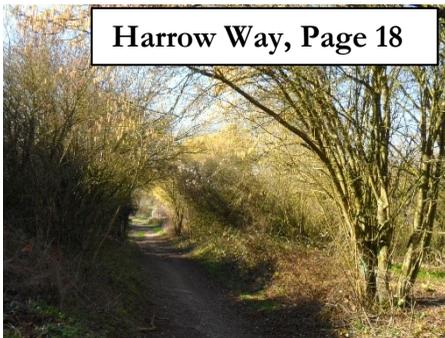
Newsletter Number 237

November 2021

**BAHS**



**Waun Mawn, Page 13**



**Harrow Way, Page 18**



**Stanchester, Page 3**

## Contents

Stanchester 2021	Page 3
50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary tea party	Page 7
2022 Lecture programme	Page 8
Medieval Graffiti Survey	Page 9
Celebrating Hampshire's Historians	Page 11
Maun Wawn – the original Stonehenge?	Page 13
YAC Update	Page 16
'A Harrowing We Will Go'	Page 18

## Editor's Letter

It's been a busy summer for BAHS. With the lifting of covid restrictions, we were delighted to brush off our trowels and head up to Stanchester again after a two-year absence. The interim report from our Chair, Mark Peryer, is on page 3.

In this edition, we also hear from Ginny Pringle about digging with Mike Parker Pearson at Waun Mawn in the Preseli Hills; and Annabel Stowe introduces her latest book, *A Harrowing We Will Go*, with an invitation to join her on one of the featured walks.

In July, five founding members of BAHS enjoyed a belated 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary tea party, whilst later in the summer The Young Archaeologist's Club finally made it down to the Mary Rose for a very successful visit.

We also take a look at various projects currently underway, including The Hampshire Field Club's 'Celebrating Hampshire Historians' and BAHS' Medieval Graffiti Survey. As a tie-in to the BAHS Covid-delayed 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Society plans to digitise our archive of printed newsletters, and produce an index of articles which will be accessible on our website. If anyone would like to help with this project, please contact:

[newsletter@bahsoc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@bahsoc.org.uk)

And finally, on the subject of the Anniversary, there are plans to celebrate with a conference to be held next year – details in the next newsletter.

*Penny Ingham*

# BAHS Stanchester Excavations – 2021

## Interim Report

In early August 2021 the Society undertook a week of further excavations at the Romano British site of Stanchester. The break enforced on us by Covid gave us the opportunity to re-appraise our investigations. Some careful correlation of aerial photographs showing our trenches over several years against the magnetometry survey carried out in 2013 by Paul Johnson led us to the conclusion that if we wanted to locate the long rectangular building suggested by the survey, then we needed to shift our attention to the west of the original Trench A.

With social distancing in mind, the original plan was to put in a long trench across the area in order to try to pick up any archaeology. However, in order to try to narrow the search we enlisted the help of David and Audrey Graham of the Surrey Archaeological Society to carry out a resistivity survey since this type of geophysical survey is particularly good at detecting walls and ditches. The results of the survey were very encouraging – see Figure 1, suggesting that there was a linear structure with a possible corridor on the south side, and gave us a better idea of where to investigate.

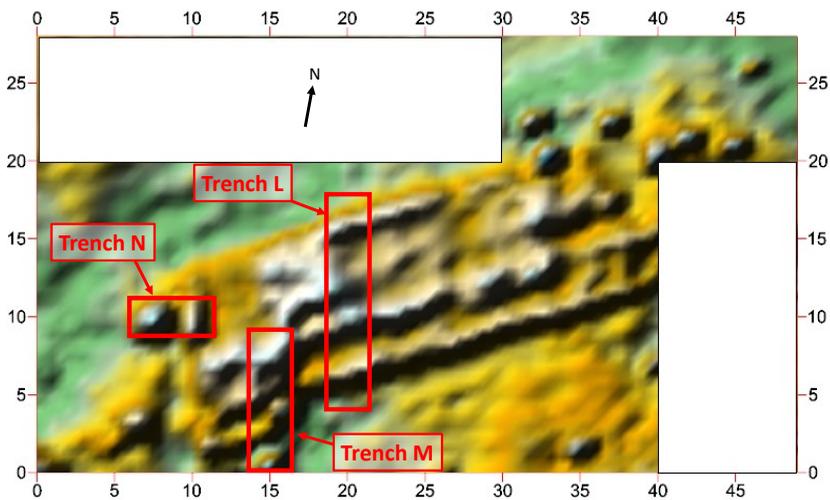
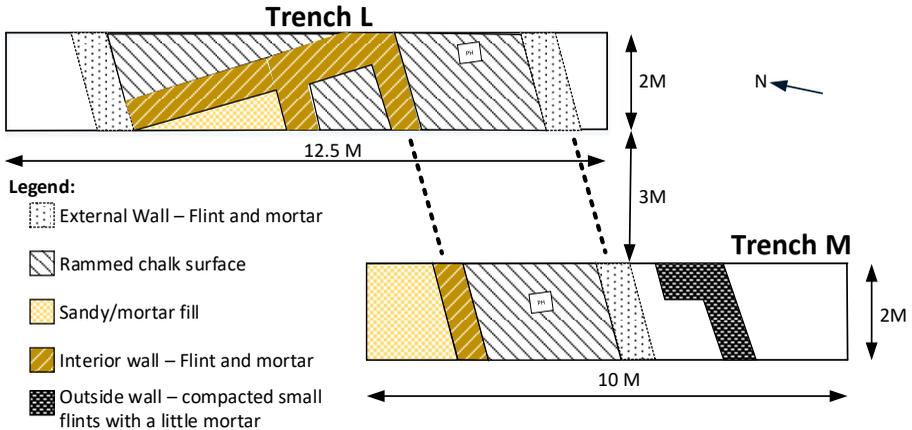


Figure 1- Plot of resistivity survey results overlaid with trench positions

Based on the results of the survey, two trenches (L and M) were planned. Trench L was aimed at confirming that we had a structure with possibly three walls. Trench M was offset to trench L and was aimed at exploring more of the middle of the structure and determining whether the structure had a wing, something that was unclear from the results of the resistivity survey. When the trenches were excavated, they revealed a series of walls and interior areas that tied up with the geophysics, see Figure 2 for a plan.



*Figure 2- Plan for trenches L and M*

To the south of the outside wall in Trench L, two exterior walls were revealed, each of which had 3 courses of flint laid in mortar remaining to a depth of approximately 30 cm above the chalk bed rock. Just outside the building on the northern side, some large Roman tiles were found. Inside the walls, we found a packed chalk surface that gave way to traces of an interior wall parallel to the longest edge of the structure. On the other side of this wall, we found a series of footings for what would have been dividing walls. To the north of Trench L, we discovered a fill of sandy mortar which was not investigated due to time constraints. In Trench M, a continuation of the south wall from trench L was found. This had the same compacted chalk surface and a trace of the main east-west interior wall.

However, Trench M had an interior area that revealed a concentration of painted wall plaster fragments – see Figure 4. Most of the wall plaster pieces

were painted a greenish yellow colour, but some of the pieces were painted red and some had hints of a linear pattern. Painted wall plaster was also found in Trench L, but to a lesser extent. Photographs were taken before samples of the plaster were lifted and bagged. Underneath the plaster and sandy-mortar fill of this interior area we found another rammed chalk floor.



*Figure 3 – Trench N, a mass of tiles*

In Trench M, we found what appears to be the remains of a lesser wall that was made from smaller flints than the main wall and with a very small amount of mortar. The slightness of this footing suggests that it was not a load bearing structural feature.

A feature common to the two trenches was a square post hole in the “corridor” section of rammed chalk flooring. The post hole was approximately 30 cm deep in Trench M and more of a shallow depression in Trench L, but their presence may be a hint of a timber structure such as a veranda.

Trench N was started late in the week, with the aim of locating the western wall of the structure to establish the western extent of the building. Trench N produced a dump of ceramic tiles and mortar in the area that had shown up in the survey as an area of high resistance – see figure 3.

The dump seemed to be slumped with the tiles at an angle suggesting a feature that needs to be investigated. One of the tiles was a complete tegula which has been tentatively dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century based on its profile. The tile also had a maker's mark comprising two intersecting circles and this matched other finds of tegula from previous excavations.

Trenches L and M produced an abundance of pottery finds, most of which are Alice Holt and Farnham greywares, but there are some other pieces which still need to be identified. All three trenches had a higher concentration of limestone roof tile fragments in the overburden with a much lower concentration of tegula and imbrex compared to elsewhere on the site. The limestone tiles seemed to be of two distinct thicknesses.

Although it is early in our investigation of this building, it does seem that we have located a dwelling rather than an agricultural building as in previous years. We have yet to confirm whether this is the building that is the source of the flue tiles we found in previous years, but this year's work has moved on our understanding of the site considerably.



*Figure 4 – Plaster fragments from trench M*

The fieldwork committee are beginning to consider how best to proceed for the coming seasons. Recently, an opportunity arose to buy a second-hand resistivity meter so that will be put to good use to survey more of the site with a view to gaining further insights before we start our next excavation.

*Mark Peryer*

## BAHS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary tea party

Mary Oliver

Although the celebrations for the membership of this special 50<sup>th</sup> birthday have been delayed until next year because of the pandemic, I decided that I would like to mark the occasion now with those who have been members since July 1971. As there are only five of us now, I invited them to tea in my garden. I had the chairs with cushions all ready and then came an unexpected downpour so we met indoors instead. My guests were Ann Broad, Josie Wall, Bob Applin and Peter Heath. We enjoyed each other's company, catching up, reminiscing and doing justice to smoked salmon sandwiches (Josie's favourite), cream tea and strawberry gateau, finishing with a glass of something sparkling to toast the next 50 years of the Society. We all look forward to celebrating with everyone else next summer.



*L to R: Peter Heath, Bob Applin, Mary Oliver, Josie Wall and Ann Broad*

## 2021-2022 LECTURE PROGRAMME

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**The Cup that Cheers: tea before Victoria**

*Joy Pibworth, Historian and guide*

Tea in Britain from the 1660s until the 1830s.

**Thursday 13th January 2022**

**Fallen Women, Riots and Arguments: the stories of South View**

*Debbie Reavell, Basingstoke Heritage Society*

This area north of Basingstoke Railway Station has some fine houses and some very curious stories. John Burgess Soper, from a family of gunsmiths, saw development opportunities but was embroiled in the local riots and had his windows broken. This will be a virtual stroll through the history of this local area.

**Thursday 10th February 2022**

**The Stonemason: the history of building Britain**

*Andrew Ziminski, Stonemason, Minerva Stone Conservation Ltd*

Last year, his book 'The Stonemason: A History of Building Britain' was published by John Murray. Andrew, who is a Director of Minerva Stone Conservation Ltd, a member of the Society of Antiquaries, and a William Morris Craft Fellow awarded by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, (as well as a consultant to the Salisbury Diocesan Advisory Committee for the conservation of stonework and monuments) will tell us about his life and career as a stonemason and his experiences repairing and restoring Britain's historic buildings.

**Thursday 10 March 2022**

**The Boxford Mosaic - a Marvellous Mythical 'Mythtery'!**

*Lindsey Bedford, The Berkshire Archaeology Research Group*

A multi-year community project, largely funded by the HLF, began in 2013 to investigate three closely located Roman sites near to the village of Boxford, West Berkshire. It was the third of these sites that produced the biggest surprise! A relatively small Roman villa managed to pack in a bath suite at one end, a few rooms in the middle, a front corridor and an end

room with a unique and extremely important mosaic floor, unparalleled in Britain. Mythical scenes and rare inscriptions were laid out like a carpet and had mosaic experts from across the UK and abroad buzzing with excitement. This talk will illuminate and elucidate the imagery and is largely drawn from the work of Anthony Beeson.

**Thursday 14 April 2022**

### **The Archaeology of the Meon Valley**

*Kay Ainsworth, Archaeologist and formerly of the Hampshire Museums Service*

Kay begins with the Palaeolithic at Warsash and ends with Post Medieval at Funtley, and briefly talks about Henry Cort & his Iron Mill. Kay includes excavations, objects and buildings as she works her way through all periods of this interesting Hampshire river valley.

**Thursday 12 May 2022**

### **The World of Stonehenge**

*Dr Neil Wilkin, Curator, Early Europe (Neolithic & Bronze Age collections), British Museum*



Neil will be talking primarily on the topic of The World of Stonehenge exhibition he is curating, the themes it charts, including cosmology and the Nebra sky-disc (on loan from Germany). While the sky-disc was found hundreds of miles from Stonehenge, Neil will be using it to shine a light on the vast interconnected world that existed around the ancient monument, spanning Britain, Ireland and mainland Europe.

**Thursday 9 June 2022 (including the AGM)**

### **Hard stone, hard labour? Post-medieval sarsen stone quarrying in southern England**

*Katy Whitaker, Historic England and PhD student*

The talk will focus on the little-known sarsen stone industry that served southern and south-eastern England, looking at archaeological evidence from quarry sites in the landscape and the extraction and working techniques applied to the stone.

## **The Hampshire Churches Medieval Graffiti Survey:** **Recording medieval graffiti in churches in and around Basingstoke**

Just before the Covid-19 pandemic hit us we were in the process of setting up a group to cover the Basingstoke area. Following on from the fascinating talk that Karen Wardley (our October guest speaker) gave us about the Hampshire Churches Medieval Graffiti Survey - and now that life is beginning to return to some semblance of normality - we are looking to make a fresh start on this interesting project.



A wealth of material in Hampshire churches awaits further research, including religious imagery, text inscriptions and images of people. Bringing this material together will provide an invaluable resource for further study and understanding of the medieval world.

St Michael's Church in Basingstoke has more work to be done and some of the surrounding rural churches may also need surveying.

*Imagery from St Cross, Winchester.*

Previous experience is not required and training will be given. The aim is to set something up over the coming weeks.

Please contact Ginny if you are interested in volunteering:  
[genny@powntleycopse.co.uk](mailto:genny@powntleycopse.co.uk)

## **Basingstoke's Historians to be Celebrated**

**Barry Shurlock**

It hardly needs saying, but in order to tell the story of anywhere it has to be researched, written and put in the public domain. In this way, year on year, the historical record is built up, corrected and extended in scope. All local historians benefit in this way from the work of others, by 'standing on the shoulders of giants', yet rarely are the individuals celebrated who push the story forward - mostly motivated by their passion for the past, and generally working on their own.

The Hampshire Field Club (HFC) has decided to make good this shortcoming with its project Celebrating Hampshire Historians (CHH). The plan is to honour all historians – in the broadest sense of the word – who have contributed, including antiquarians, authors, editors, bibliographers, archaeologists, mapmakers, archivists etc. There will be a cut-off point, so that only historians who had died by the year 2000 will be included.

HFC is one of only 24 local bodies nationwide to have its project chosen by the London-based Institute of Historical Research as a contribution to its centenary celebrations. This prestigious national organisation is a centre for historical research and directs such projects as British History Online, the Victoria County History and the Bibliography of English and Irish History.

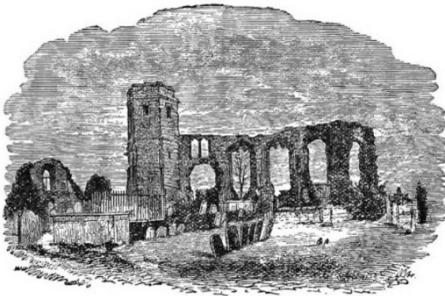
CHH will generate a website-based collection of profiles of historians who over the years have made significant contributions to the history of the county. Former HFC President Dick Selwood will lead the project with the help of other members and proposals from Hampshire's 100 or more local history groups, including BAHS. Commenting on the new project, he said: "The core audience for CHH will be the members of the contributing organisations. We hope that participant organisations will draw attention to the CHH website, which will provide material for their newsletters, blogs, social media etc."

The HFC has won its place against stiff competition. On its website the IHR says: "Following a huge response to our Open Call, we are delighted to announce events organised by partners across the country, bringing together universities, museums, archives, artists, musicians and volunteers

to engage local and national communities with the discipline and practice of history. All [projects] approach history in imaginative and creative ways: addressing urgent challenges, discovering or amplifying marginalised stories, promoting inclusivity, engaging diverse communities, and informing and inspiring the next generation of historians.”

Hampshire is a perfect setting for the CHH project and Basingstoke is one of its richest sources of stories from the past. Historians who will be covered therefore will include Dr James Elwin Millard, rector of St Michael’s, and Francis Joseph Baigent, antiquarian (and, incidentally, a witness in the trial of the Tichborne Claimant), who together in 1889 published *History of the Ancient Town and Manor of Basingstoke with a brief account of the Siege of Basing House, A.D. 1643-5*.

In terms of local history, Baigent and Millard were ahead of the curve and anticipated such projects as the Hampshire Record Society and, of course, the VCH. Amazon sell a reprint of their book and the whole text can also be read online at: [#114 - A history of the ancient town and manor of Basingstoke in the ... - Full View | HathiTrust Digital Library](#)



**The Chapel & Guild of the Holy Ghost.**

According to Turley [1], who lists the catalogue of the Cope Collection in the University of Southampton and Gilbert and Godwin’s *Bibliotheca Hantoniensis*, Millard also published in 1874 an *Account of Basingstoke, Basing and the Neighbourhood*, with woodcuts, and in 1878 a *Catalogue of Books Selected from [his library]*. Another of his works, published in Southampton in 1882 is *Book of Accounts of the Wardens of the Fraternity of the Holy Ghost in Basingstoke*.

Other Basingstoke historians under consideration are Joseph Jefferson, who in 1809 preceded Millard with *A History of the Holy Ghost Chapel at Basingstoke*, as well as more recent contributors, such as George W. Willis

*Sketch from page 110 of ‘History of the Ancient Town and Manor of Basingstoke with a brief account of the Siege of Basing House, A.D. 1643-5’ by Baigent and Millard, 1889*

According to Turley [1], who lists the catalogue of the Cope Collection in the University of Southampton and Gilbert and

and Diana Stanley. CHH welcomes recommendations from BAHS members (contact: [barryshurlock@gmail.com](mailto:barryshurlock@gmail.com)).

One of the great assets of BAHS – perhaps unique in the county – is its bibliography of the published works on Basingstoke maintained by Bob Applin and posted on the website. Started by Bob and his late wife Barbara, who wrote several books on Basingstoke’s history and was an editor for the publishers Macmillan, it was prompted by the need to lay out the references of Eric Stokes in his *The Making of Basingstoke*.

Profiles of Hampshire’s historians, which are thought to number about 200, will start to be posted on the HFC website from December 2021.

[1] Turley, R.V., ed., *Hampshire and Isle of Wight Bibliographies*, Winchester, 1975.

## Waun Mawn: The Original Stonehenge?

Ginny Pringle

Close to Stonehenge’s bluestone quarries in west Wales, the dismantled ‘stone circle’ at Waun Mawn offers the possibility there may be a grain of



truth in a nine hundred year old legend about Stonehenge being built from an earlier stone circle. In 2010, a team of archaeologists led by Mike Parker Pearson began the search for the source of the Stonehenge bluestones at various sites in the Preseli Hills.

*The one remaining standing bluestone monolith at Waun Mawn (looking north).*

At Carn Goedog, a rocky outcrop high on the hillside where bluestone monoliths are still in place, quarrying activity was dated to around 3300-3400 BC. This presented a problem because the bluestones were not erected at Stonehenge until around 3000 BC. Mike's theory was that the bluestones had not been quarried specifically for Stonehenge, but to be erected locally and so over the next seven years possible sites in the vicinity were explored.

After many false leads where Mike's patience was tested on Bronze and Iron Age sites, initial investigations in 2017 at a rather unimposing Waun Mawn, just 5km from the Carn Goedog quarry, finally offered promise. A bleak, open location from which it is possible on a clear day to see Carn Goedog in the distance and with a view north into Cardiganshire and beyond, Waun Mawr (aptly translated from Welsh as 'peat moor') is not alien to hill fog and other kinds of extreme weather west Wales is notorious for. Just four visible bluestone monoliths, three recumbent and one standing, originally stood in an arc, possibly the only remnants of a stone circle.

Investigations continued again in 2018 with evidence for stone holes marking places where monoliths had originally stood. In one hole a broken stump of bluestone remained and was a perfect match for the profile of a bluestone at Stonehenge. Following the projected arc of the circle revealed a diameter of 110m; the same diameter as the early enclosing ditch of Stonehenge. Could this be coincidence? Radiocarbon and OSL dating from Waun Mawn suggest construction c. 3000 BC, shortly before the initial construction of Stonehenge. Both sites are orientated on the midsummer solstice sunrise.

More investigation was required and September 2021 saw a return to Waun Mawn after what seemed like an interminable long break of three years thanks to Covid-19 and other factors beyond the team's control. Few students were permitted because of restrictions imposed by Covid-19 measures and the onus was on Mike's dedicated army of volunteers. Sleeves were rolled up (when it wasn't raining) and muscles were flexed ready for the big push – no luxury of mechanical diggers on this difficult to access moorland site.

The strategy was to systematically work along the arc of the projected circle in previously unexplored sections, manually removing the turf where

stone holes would theoretically be located, cleaning back to reveal any features, dealing with them if any were found and then backfilling and relaying the turf. It became very repetitive with the average trench size often a typical 20m x 15m to catch all. The volunteers got into the swing of things like a chain gang merry-go-round, with turf removed by coffee break, cleaned back by lunch and if no features were found the trench backfilled by close of day, whilst other volunteers started on the next trench during the course of the afternoon. It wasn't all straightforward as some trenches revealed a mosaic of natural stone that made trowelling challenging and at others gorse roots made it almost impossible to cut the turves. Where there were no roots the peaty turf was easy to cut and, with practice, each turf was removed to within a few centimetres of the subsoil where in good circumstances a quick clean with trowels would reveal any obvious features. Not that dissimilar to working on the chalk where many features such as postholes and pits are easily revealed. Our turf piles were massive, but neat and to be proud of, and at times made handy windbreaks.

So what did we find this year? Some anticipated stone holes were not to be found and it became apparent that the circle had never been completed. Evidence was found though for markers where future monoliths were intended; shallow impressions in the soil ringed with small stones.



*Searching for shadows in the soil*

This is the first time that excavations have shown a stone circle abandoned whilst under construction, and an insight into the methods employed, for

this site at least. The markers were in a short continuous sequence and suggest construction of the circle might have been planned in stages, perhaps reliant on different groups of people bringing their own bluestones to the site.

As is often the case, the more that is discovered the more questions there are to be asked. Climate change, conflict, economic or social migration, whatever the reasons, transporting bluestones all the way to Wessex would have been no quick and easy task and perhaps part of a much longer inter-generational event. Recent isotope work supports a hypothesis of migration of both people and animals from Wales to Stonehenge during this time in the Neolithic, and although it looks like Waun Mawn was the source of some of the bluestones it leaves a question mark over the other bluestones at Stonehenge.

Working alongside Mike and his team is always entertaining and enjoyable although at times the physical work and weather can be demanding. Nevertheless there is always very much a family atmosphere and this year I am pleased to say we were rewarded much of the time by hot sunshine and local farm shop ice cream hurriedly brought by Mike to the site before it melted.

Reference: [Mike Parker Pearson et al., 2021, 'The original Stonehenge? A dismantled stone circle in the Preseli Hills of west Wales, published online by Cambridge University Press at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/antiquity/article/original-stonehenge-a-dismantled-stone-circle-in-the-preseli-hills-of-west-wales/B7DAA4A7792B4DAB57DDE0E3136FBC33>](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/antiquity/article/original-stonehenge-a-dismantled-stone-circle-in-the-preseli-hills-of-west-wales/B7DAA4A7792B4DAB57DDE0E3136FBC33) and *Antiquity* 2021 Vol. 95 (379): 85–103

## **Basingstoke YAC update**

Yayeeeeeee! We made it! We finally completed our long awaited trip to the Historic Dockyards to visit the Mary Rose! After three re-schedules, David, Carla, Penny and I finally took 15 of our YACsters down to Portsmouth to see the remains of this amazing Tudor warship. Hiring minibuses from Basingstoke Community Transport and with Covid restrictions in place, we masked up, sanitised down and held tight for a super, fun day out.



With the YACsters split into groups, they needed to complete a quiz sheet, meaning that they had to look at artefacts and displays very carefully. Some were even canny enough to ask the museum staff who were on duty, causing them in turn to read their own displays for the answers. By the time we had finished, news of our engaging group

had made it as far as the gift shop, and as leaders we were congratulated by the museum for bringing such an enthusiastic and well behaved bunch of young people. It even resulted in one of the staff members sourcing, and allowing our young people to handle, genuine artefacts from the Mary Rose collection. It was such an amazing and unique experience! We can finally now say a proper thank you for the kind donation of NEHHAS funds for making the trip possible.

October saw our first proper face to face session in over eighteen months as we happily returned to the Willis Museum. Having sadly been let down by a new guest speaker, we had to quickly devise a last minute session. Penny's knowledge of the Vikings came into its own as she speedily put together a great session involving the YACsters looking at language, identifying place names and making their own Viking names and nick-names. They also had the opportunity to taste some Viking Feast bread and have a go at making a Viking 'beanie' hat, using Nalbinding, a cross between knitting and macrame.

As we prepare for all things Anglo Saxon, with the help of Penny Ingham for our November session, we currently stand with a strong membership of 20, having lost three and taken three from the waiting list. We have also had more enquiries from families, leaving our waiting list at a healthy 15.

Thanks as always must go to Paul, Carla and David, for helping us to keep the meetings staffed with volunteers. Paul also continues to do a sterling job keeping all our finances in order. The YACsters continue to be supported by great parents, who are as enthusiastic as their offspring!

*Nikki Read*

## BOOK SHELF

We have three new publications on the book shelf this week: A-HARROWING We Shall Go: Exploring Britain's 'Oldest Road' by Society member Annabel Stowe; 'River Kings' by Dr Cat Jarman, and 'A SOLDIER AND A GENTLEMAN: Brigadier General Sir Bertram Portal, 1866-1949' by Richard Waldram.

### **A-HARROWING We Shall Go: Exploring Britain's 'Oldest Road' Walking Guide with an Archaeological Focus** By Annabel Stowe



*“...Gotta get out in the sun and rain,  
And feel the wind on my skin again ...”*

These lines of Kevin Ayers from the psychedelic days of the 1970s (showing my age!) have perhaps never seemed so relevant and appealing, after the restrictions of the past year and a half. So as fresh-air freedom returns, we can stop dreaming and start exploring again. But my story starts in the pre-Covid days ...

#### ***New Year's Eve 2018***

What better way to see in the New Year than lying in front of a roaring fire, with OS Explorer maps for company, pondering which ancient trackway to explore next? A previous New Year's Eve project had led to the publication in 2018 of *Roman Roving: Walking a Roman Road*. The plan this time was to go further back into prehistory. The Harrow Way would do nicely. So New Year's Day 2019 saw me heading up to the ridge north of Overton, to sample this venerable trackway, and to take the first chilly

steps into my adventure, sheltered from the worst of the winter blast by pendulous creepers and a comforting belt of ancient woodland.

### *Har-weg, here-weg, hearg weg ...*

The origins of the name ‘Harrow Way’ or ‘Harroway’ are delightfully complex (and the use of hyphens variable). The first reference to the ‘Hoare Way’ or ‘Ancient Way’ (*hoare-* or *har-* as in ‘hoary’ or ‘ancient’) is in an Anglo-Saxon charter of around AD900. But how hoary is it? Does it go back to the Bronze Age? Let’s take a closer look.

By the Bronze Age, pre-existing local tracks were starting to link up into a more cohesive network of long-distance, continuous trackways (cue name number two: *here-weg*, ‘army way’ in the sense of ‘through road’ or ‘thoroughfare’). Along these trade routes, prestige items could change hands and raw materials be accessed – tin in Cornwall, for a start. For the flourishing Bronze Age civilisations of the Eastern Mediterranean, copper was available ‘on the spot’ in Cyprus (the clue is in the name), but major deposits of tin were scarce, and had to be sourced much further afield. Coming overland from the Continent, it would make sense to take the shortest sea crossing at the Straits of Dover, before heading westwards along the chalk ridges of Southern England - these ‘high ways’, avoiding the marshy ground of the valley floors, were literally ‘highways’ in prehistory.

So we start to see the possible origins of the Harrow Way as a long-distance, coast-to-coast route: from the White Cliffs of Dover to the mouth of the River Axe, in Devon, passing Stonehenge on the way - *hearg weg*, ‘way to the shrine or holy place’, is another Old English name for this ancient trackway. So let’s tentatively conclude that the Harrow Way goes back at least to the Bronze Age. (Interestingly, on a local note, investigations of historic landscape character by the County Archaeologist (*Footnote i*) throw further light on this Bronze Age question – but I’m starting to give too much away!)

### *Harrow Way: Trackway through the Ages*

But back to my New Year’s Eve project. Which stretch of the Harrow Way should I explore? North-West Hampshire seemed a good choice, between Oakley and Cholderton, on the Wiltshire border. This would take in a particularly fine stretch of green lane, to the north of Overton and

Whitchurch, plus, further west, re-create the feeling of awe that ancient travellers would have experienced as they approached Quarley Hill, heralding the ceremonial centres of Salisbury Plain just over the horizon.

So, after countless hours, days, weeks of research, preparation and plodding, *A-HARROWING We Shall Go* was starting to take shape. Or was it? Walks with a Bronze Age theme had been my original intention, but the Harrow Way had other ideas. Walking Margary's RR43 in preparation for *Roman Roving*, I had had the definite feeling (sorry for the cliché) of following in Roman footsteps. The Harrow Way was different. The more I walked, the more I sensed the multi-layers of history beneath my feet. Sometimes I was in the company of Bronze Age mourners, or Iron Age farmers, sometimes with 18<sup>th</sup> century drovers avoiding the turnpike tolls. So there it was: *Trackway through the Ages*. Circular walks from the Harrow Way, each presenting a snapshot in time, each focusing on a different historical period in the ancient trackway's long history.

If I have perhaps whetted your appetite, is it time for you to pull on your walking boots, locate your OS Explorer maps, acquire a copy of *A-HARROWING We Shall Go*\* and become a Harrow Wayfarer yourself? And remember, you can always be a fireside Harrow Wayfarer if you prefer, discovering the shadowy figures who have travelled this old road down through the millennia, from the comfort of your armchair.

*Footnote i: Pers. Comm. D. Hopkins*

*Main sources:*

Timperley, H W and Brill, E. *Ancient Trackways of Wessex* (The History Press, 2013)

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Grinsell, L V. *The Archaeology of Wessex* (Methuen, 1958)

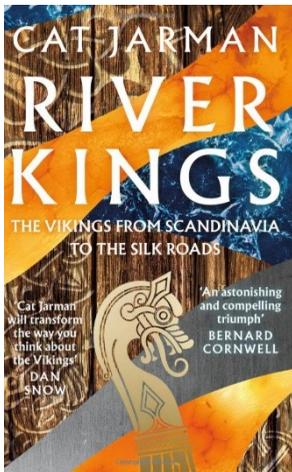
\*In memory of Marija: *A-HARROWING We Shall Go* Exploring the Harrow Way, Britain's 'Oldest Road' is dedicated to the memory of our

lovely Marija Currell (1950-2020). It is due out in the autumn, with an Early Bird offer for BAHS members of £10.50.

All are welcome to join Annabel on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November for a circular walk starting in historic Overton and taking in a stretch of Harrow Way and old drove roads. Please email Annabel if you would like to participate: [annabel.stowe@btinternet.com](mailto:annabel.stowe@btinternet.com) (07831 840824)

## RIVER KINGS by Cat Jarman

The Vikings from Scandinavia to the Silk Roads



In 1982, at Repton in Derbyshire, Prof Martin Biddle and his team found a small, orange, carnelian bead in what is believed to be the mass grave of the Great Viking army. Flash forward to 2017 when the bead came into the temporary possession of bio- and field archaeologist Dr Cat Jarman. Little did she know that the semi-precious gemstone would take her research in a whole new direction.

Carnelian was fashionable among Vikings in the late ninth and early tenth century. It would have originated in India or the areas that are now Iran and Iraq - providing tangible evidence of Viking contact with the Islamic caliphate and the ancient trading networks that formed part of the extensive Silk Roads.

It is common knowledge that the Vikings travelled west, their infamous raids on Britain and Ireland eventually leading to conquest and settlement. *River Kings*, however, sets out to examine their progress south to Constantinople, and east to Baghdad and beyond. Using aDNA and strontium isotope analysis from ancient burial sites along the Dneiper river in present day Ukraine, Dr Jarman provides compelling evidence that the Rus were an ethnic group largely originating from Sweden. With reference to original sources, we also learn that Scandinavians formed the majority of the Varangian Guard, a specialist mercenary unit who acted as bodyguards

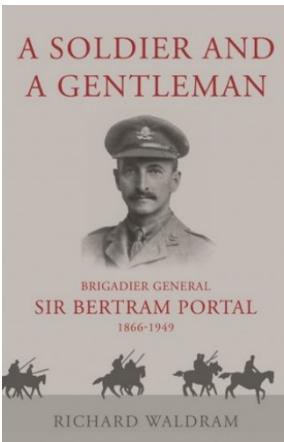
to the Byzantine emperors in Constantinople. (A runic inscription carved on the balcony of Hagia Sophia features the Scandinavian name Halfdan.)

*River Kings* is full of intriguing insights, including an alternative explanation for why we keep finding so many buried treasure hoards: according to Snorri Sturluson, the twelfth century Icelandic historian and poet, Odin decreed that when a warrior died and went to Valhalla, he could take with him everything on his funeral pyre, *and* whatever he had hidden in the ground. In other words, burying your silver before a battle was a win-win: you could return to it if you survived, or enjoy it in the afterlife if you perished.

*River Kings* (HarperCollins, paperback, £9.99) is a fascinating, groundbreaking book, and I highly recommend it. A perfect stocking-filler!

*Penny Ingham*

### **‘A SOLDIER AND A GENTLEMAN: Brigadier General Sir Bertram Portal, 1866-1949’ by Richard Waldram**



Compiled from his diaries and family letters, this biography of Sir Bertram Portal features both Victorian social and military history. The Portal family were prominent in north Hampshire for 150 years, especially for their paper mill at Laverstoke and their connection with the Bank of England. Bertram was born and grew up at Malshanger and wrote about his childhood years, giving a lively account of a gentry family in the mid-Victorian era.

Apart from his considerable military exploits in the Boer War, the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916 and on the Western Front, he lived at

Southington House in Overton for more than 40 years and involved himself in every aspect of village life and also in broader Hampshire causes.

‘A Soldier and a Gentleman’ is published by Matador, £15.00.

## **Gremlins in the works**

The conclusion to Peter Stone's **'Postscript to the report on 'The First Brexit'** [August 2021 Newsletter] was swallowed by a computer so you all missed out on his guess why Carausius was murdered by Allectus, so here it is:

Following on from '...Allectus minted gold coins ...for the base metal 'radiates' of the Central Empire', the piece concluded with:

'Maybe gold had accumulated in the hands of British estate owners and they preferred to keep it, and [control over] the tax system, that way. So perhaps any campaign that Carausius may have wanted to recover the continental region after the loss of Boulogne could have been seen as likely to upset the financial apple cart even if it did not end in defeat. If that were the case then the administrator Allectus, perhaps seen by soldiers and sailors as a provider of pay in sound money (and a quiet life) and by civilians as a low tax and spend advocate, would be the obvious choice as successor. So it may not be coincidental that the reverse on some of Allectus' coins are indicative of defensive naval power.

One thing seems certain – we can never know for sure.'

We can however always be sure that computers are never to be trusted!

## **William Yeats Gibbs – Addendum**

The article on stonemason and sculptor William Yeats Gibbs in the February 2021 newsletter had a couple of entries where his manner of signing monuments could not then be established; information is now available:

**1841** Kings Somborne, St Peter and St Paul. James and Catherine Edwards monument signed 'W Gibbs Andover'.

**1842** Weyhill, St Michael and All Angels. John Ker monument signed 'W Gibbs of Andover'.



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**DECEMBER 2021 – JUNE 2022 DIARY DATES**

**All lectures at Church Cottage, 7.30pm**

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December: The Cup that Cheers: tea before Victoria**  
*Joy Pibworth, Historian and guide*

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> January: Fallen Women, Riots and Arguments: stories of South View** *Debbie Reavell, Basingstoke Heritage Society*

**Thursday 10 February: The Stonemason: the history of building Britain** *Andrew Ziminski, Stonemason, Minerva Stone Conservation Ltd*

**Thursday 10 March 2022: The Boxford Mosaic - a Marvellous Mythical 'Mythtery'!** *Lindsey Bedford, The Berkshire Archaeology Research Group*

**Thursday 14 April 2022: The Archaeology of the Meon Valley**  
*Kay Ainsworth, Archaeologist and formerly of the Hampshire Museums Service*

**Thursday 12 May 2022: The World of Stonehenge** *Dr Neil Wilkin, Curator, Early Europe (Neolithic & Bronze Age collections), British Museum*

**Thursday 9 June 2022: (including the AGM): Hard stone, hard labour? Post-medieval sarsen stone quarrying in southern England**  
*Katy Whitaker, Historic England and PhD student*