



BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

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CALENDAR:

Thursday 26th February: "The Iron-Age in Cornwall" Lecture by
Josh Schwieso (formerly with Department of the
Environment). Church Cottage, 7.30 p.m.

Saturday 28th February: Council for British Archaeology Group 12
Annual Business Meeting, followed by Les Groube,
Dorset Archaeological Committee's new Rural
Survey Officer talking about his work.
Stevens Lecture Theatre, The Museum, St. Ann Street,
Salisbury. 2.00 p.m.

Saturday 13th March: Parish Boundaries meeting. Geography Lecture
Theatre 1, University of Southampton. 2.00 p.m.

The Iron Age in Cornwall

For the second time this lecture season our attention will be directed outside familiar Wessex with the February speaker, Josh Schwieso. Josh, who is currently lecturing in educational psychology at Bulmershe College, Reading, was previously, after graduating in Archaeology, a full-time excavator with the Department of the Environment when he directed excavations in Cornwall on Iron-Age sites. In particular he dug a site, characteristic of the region, known as a 'round'. Some of his lecture will be devoted to the description of this which he will set into the fuller context of the Iron-Age in general in Cornwall.

Although no longer a professional archaeologist in the strictest sense - he still digs when he can - Josh also lectures and takes weekend schools for the University of London extra mural diploma courses on Iron-Age and Roman Britain. He is therefore no stranger to lecturing and should be expected to give us a good evening.

Don't forget we are now at Church Cottage. Thursday 26th February at 7.30 p.m.

Parish Boundaries Project

Because of the amount of interest shown in the Society of Antiquaries' research project which is part of their Evolution of the Landscape of Wessex project, Collin Bowen of the Royal Commission and Mike Hughes have arranged an afternoon meeting on the subject at the University of Southampton on Saturday 13th March. A number of speakers are being invited and there will be a detailed discussion afterwards.

Parish boundaries provide a very real clue to the land use and settlement patterns of our forebears (see Newsletter No.29) and much can be gained from their study.

As a preliminary to any work we might eventually undertake, we had intended inviting Collin Bowen, who, you will remember talked to the Society last year, mainly about Stonehenge, to come and lead us on a parish boundary walk in the Summer. The afternoon discussion next month should give us all useful background information on how we can better use our eyes to read the signs of the countryside as we travel about.

Again we should be able to arrange group travel in shared cars.

Geography Lecture Theatre 1, 2.00 p.m. - 5.30 p.m. University of Southampton. 13th March 1976.

Situations Vacant

Members may be interested in an advertisement in The Times of the 5th February. It reads as follows:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL VOLUNTEERS
required immediately for Iron Age excavation in central Hampshire, till 31st March. Hostel accommodation in Winchester. Contact P.J. Fasham, M3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESCUE COMMITTEE, Beaconsfield House, Andover Road, Winchester, Hampshire. Telephone Winchester 881299.

While not put in the Newsletter specifically to attract members of this

Society, it does serve to demonstrate how desperate directors get when volunteers are not forthcoming. No doubt Ken Smith at Winklebury could put out a similar plea for help. Please try and help him if you can at weekends.

Silchester and its Environment - a suitable case for Survey

Recently interest has been generated towards the understanding of Roman sites as social and economic units within the context of Roman Britain as a whole. The development of Roman town sites has previously been judged by the more tangible evidence of their structural remains. The dating of Fora, temples, houses and public baths has, without doubt, built up a massive amount of data which has in turn highlighted just how little is known about the principle cause of economic "growth and decline" in Roman Britain. This is specifically true about Silchester. The town has been extensively excavated and we now possess a nearly complete town plan, plus an assemblage of salient dates from which the growth and decline of the excavated town can be postulated. However, these dateable contexts can only be applied to the town within the Walls of Silchester: very little can be accurately inferred about the extra-mural settlement at this stage. A dateable analogy between the town and its environs is certainly reasonable. It is fairly reasonable to assume that the growth or decline of a town would be reflected by similar trends within its immediate sphere of influence. However, such assumptions must be tested by location and excavation of sites within this sphere if an accurate overall picture is to emerge. For example, it is widely held that towns in Roman Britain entered a period of decline in the fourth century, if by analogy we applied this decline to the villa economy, the overall picture would be one of economic stagnation and decline: yet excavation of villa sites has revealed a picture of economic boom in the fourth century.

This leads to the question, "Does the economic viability of a Roman town necessarily stand or fall by the decline of its public edifices?" Or does this indicate a redistribution of civic resources towards less tangible economic development? Undoubtedly the fortification of towns would have exerted enormous financial pressures upon the wealthy town magnates, and if this took place in the early to mid third century, as would appear to be the case at Silchester, these wealthy few would certainly devote their resources towards more rewarding projects rather than maintaining existing cultural institutions which have little financial benefit to the individuals concerned.

This leads me to question the assumption that town life degenerated economically in the fourth century. There may have been a tendency to see the economy refocused into the countryside, but nevertheless towns would have remained vital marketing and distribution centres for the products of the countryside. Indeed the areas around the towns would have become centres of primary and manufactured products whose wealth depended upon the continued viability of the town unit, as the centre of consumer populations. The extra-mural region at Silchester could reflect this kind of development.

The work of the Calleva Field Survey Group should, it is hoped, help to throw light upon the expansion or contraction of Calleva as it developed and maintained itself. The extra-mural region at Silchester is an archaeological enigma compared with the town itself. Aerial photographs have revealed extensive areas of occupation, however, very

little has been done to establish a dateable relationship between these areas and the town itself. Modern farming methods, including the removal of hedge boundaries, are destroying much of the archaeological sequence and it is becoming essential that the extra-mural region should be subjected to investigation on the ground. For this reason the Calleva Group has been formed, and we hope that members of the Basingstoke Archaeological Society will volunteer to aid us in this project. As work proceeds we hope to publish our initial findings in the Newsletter. These will form interim reports which will be compiled into a fuller report to be published on the conclusion of this project. The first of these reports (Areas A & B)* can give a tantalising glimpse of the extent of occupation and land usage in the immediate vicinity of Calleva.

D. RUSSELL

* The first of these reports will appear in Newsletter No.33.