



BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

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CONTENTS

Alice Holt Potteries or Down in the Forest ...
Town and Country in Roman Wessex
Silchester in the News Again
Impressions of a First Dig
Mallowan's Memoirs
Basingstoke Records in the Hampshire Record Office
News and Notes

CALENDAR

- Wednesday 19th October 'The Eruption of Santorini and the Legend of Lost Atlantis'. Lecture by Prof. Colin Renfrew, Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton. Lecture Theatre 1, Medical & Sciences Building, Boldrewood (entrance off Bassett Crescent). Aspects of Antiquity Series.
- Thursday 27th October 'The Roman Pottery Industries of Alice Holt Forest'. Lecture by Malcolm Lyne. Church Cottage, Basingstoke, 7.45 p.m.
- Wednesday 2nd November 'Celtic Continuum - Pagans, Poets and Priests in Ancient Britain'. Lecture by Dr. Anne Ross, University of Southampton. Southampton University Archaeological Society. Lecture Theatre G2, Arts II Building. 7.30 p.m.
- Wednesday 9th November 'Neolithic Origins - the View from New Guinea'. Lecture by Prof. J. Golson, School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. University of Southampton. 7.30 p.m. Aspects of Antiquity Series.
- Recent Excavations at Crickley Hill, Gloucestershire. Lecture by Phillip Dixon, University of Nottingham. University of Southampton Archaeological Society. 7.30 p.m.
- Saturday 12th November 'Town and Country in Roman Wessex'. One-day Symposium. Vyne School, Basingstoke. 10.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m. Organised in conjunction with C.B.A. Group 12. Details on page 3.

ALICE HOLT POTTERIES or DOWN IN THE FOREST ...

What does the title of our October lecture bring to mind? Dark silhouettes against a furnace background? A peaceful excavation site under shady trees? Neat sequences of pottery types?

Malcolm Lyne has recently been in the news (Observer Colour Supplement) with the firing of his reconstructed Roman pottery kiln in the Alice Holt Forest near Farnham, and Current Archaeology 54 carried an account of his work with Rosemary Jefferies on the pottery from the Alice Holt kilns. Needless to say, it was the Observer which had the dramatic furnace-like photograph!

Several members of this Society went to see the firing of the reconstructed kiln and have been helping to excavate an authentic one. At first sight the kiln being excavated seemed disappointingly undramatic. The baked clay structure of the kiln, buried among tree roots, seemed surprisingly simple and none too easy to distinguish from the surrounding soil until you'd 'got your eye in', and details like post holes were nothing like as clear as they appear on a chalk site. Of course there was plenty of pottery! Quantities of sherds lay even among the leaves on the surface of the trench before digging began, as this was laid out across both the kiln and its dump. And it's interesting pottery - Malcolm feels that what has been found so far is very homogenous and probably of a narrow date range and he hopes that it may even be possible to identify individual potters by the combs they used for decorating the pots. Detailed and careful work on the pottery will be needed to test such ideas.

The kiln site, of course, is a 'protected' Ancient Monument and is only being excavated as a clearing-up exercise after the messy work of vandals with a metal-detector, and the Department of the Environment has issued stern conditions for the excavation.

The reconstructed kiln is an attempt by Malcolm Lyne and Rosemary Jefferies to test ideas that have emerged from their study of pottery and kiln sites. They have built a double-flue kiln of a type known in the Forest, and Farnham School of Art provided 'Roman' pots for firing, while the University of Surrey provided thermocouples to test the temperature at either flue and in the kiln chamber.

Watching the firing made it easier to understand the kiln excavation. The pots were carefully placed in the chamber over a layer of broken sherds - Malcolm thinks the sherds we have been finding in the excavated kiln chamber, mixed with kiln fabric, were probably used in this way as a base - and an 'igloo' of turves was carefully built up over them. Then brushwood outside each flue was lit and the two fires carefully fed, piece by piece - all the wood for these fires was weighed so that all the ingredients for this experiment are known. When the temperature at one end became noticeably higher than at the other, the burning brushwood had to be carefully moved back a little until the difference lessened, to avoid cracking the baking pots, and this makes one realise the skill needed by the Roman potters to achieve equal temperatures without the use of thermocouples to guide them.

There would be no short cut, however, in the rest of the firing, as the two fires would have to be fed carefully, piece by piece, to reach and keep

the right temperature, and it would probably be two days before the kiln could be opened up. It will be interesting to see how well the pots have been fired and how they compare with the real Roman pots found in excavation.

BARBARA APPLIN

The Roman Pottery Industries of Alice Holt Forest, by Malcolm Lyne, Thursday 27th October, Church Cottage (not Chute House), 7.45 p.m.

TOWN AND COUNTRY IN ROMAN WESSEX

Members cannot be anything but impressed by our programme this season, catering for most tastes and interests. The Basingstoke Gazette recently gave us some publicity by commenting upon it.

By far the most important item, the one-day symposium on the 12th November: Town and Country in Roman Wessex, is the brain child of Mike Hughes, the new secretary of the C.B.A. Group 12. Fortunately for us he chose Basingstoke as the location and involved the Society as soon as he could to help with the local organisation.

The array of speakers has the ring of quality about it. Henry Cleere, Director of the C.B.A. will chair the meeting which will be opened by Councillor Dudley Keep, whose interest in archaeology will be known to many members of this Society. There are to be five main papers and a few shorter ones.

Local interests are well represented. Dr. Mike Fulford will be talking on Roman Silchester, which will be a broader aspect than the talk he gave this Society in April which concentrated on his excavations there over the last few years. Jill Greenaway, who also talked to us in an earlier season, will put Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum) in its general tribal context in: 'Some Aspects of the Atrebates'. The ubiquitous David Johnston will talk on 'Hampshire Villas' and Chris Young will talk on 'Trade Links between Wessex and the Upper Thames Valley as Illustrated by Pottery'. Dr. Graham Webster of Birmingham University provides the star turn with a paper 'The Military Conquest of the South West in its Historical Context'.

Tickets are available from Peter Heath, 1 Hammond Road, Basingstoke (Bas.27713) at 90p each. It is expected that about 200 people will be gathered together at the Vyne School on the 12th November and tickets are already selling like proverbial hot cakes. Don't leave it too long before you buy yours!

As always at C.B.A. functions there will be a C.B.A. bookstall selling their own publications but also Hammicks Bookshop have agreed to man a bookstall devoted entirely to archaeology. We have supplied a long and comprehensive list of titles for them which, if they can provide them, should surely be the finest range ever to be displayed at one time in Basingstoke. Titles have been deliberately chosen within the 'under ten pounds' price range!

We the co-organisers have to marshall the car parking, to act as stewards, and to make and serve coffee and tea. Please could we have as many volunteers to help as possible so that the 'workers' may enjoy the papers too. Offers of help please to any member of the Committee. Our recently

convened Publicity Sub-Committee are arranging a small display on local archaeology. So all in all, a very full day is planned.

Saturday 12th November, Vyne School. 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Admission by ticket only. 90p.

SILCHESTER IN THE NEWS AGAIN

Readers of the national daily papers on the 19th September would have been intrigued by an item concerning a scheme to sell off plots, each of an eighth of an acre, of part of the Roman town of Silchester. The proceeds, an expected £700,000, would be used to finance excavations, set up a museum, and establish a trust to administer them.

Buyers of plots would only be entitled to look at their possessions as they would have no rights to do anything with the land except own it. Thus, another sponsorship venture which has caught the fancy of many leading archaeologists.

Latest information to hand is that sale of the plots is to go ahead probably beginning in November. The Trust, similar to the Trust which oversees Fishbourne, will be set up as soon as the cash comes rolling in. It is expected that Dr. Mike Fulford will be appointed director of excavations.

Most members will already know that Dr. Fulford has again been excavating at Silchester, this year well inside the walls. Some of his attention this year has been directed towards the Forum. To his and everyone else's delight he has discovered that the earlier excavations appear only to have dug to wall level leaving vast undisturbed deposits, suggesting that the early history of the town is then still to be uncovered.

Before you rush off for your purses, the going rate for a plot is currently somewhere in the region of £862.

Angela Harvey, who lives at Tadley, was able to get along to the current dig, her first, and has contributed the following observations:

Impressions of a First Dig

When Mike Fulford first told the Society of the 1977 Silchester dig, back in April, I promised myself I would spare time to go along.

My offer of help, though I was utterly inexperienced, was accepted readily and my first day was spent in pot washing, making tea and generally making myself useful so that the other diggers could get on with the work in the limited time available. I was shown round the site, which is part of the Basilica, and the various aspects were explained to me.

On my third day I was delighted to be allowed to put trowel to soil and with some guidance from another digger and, bearing in mind the large variety of pots I had washed, I scraped my first Silchester soil. I made several finds - pieces of pottery, quartz, slag and bones - but no coins, although at least 30 have been found.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Silchester and really appreciate the way I was accepted by the members of the team who were all willing to explain things to me and give me any help I needed, and I am especially grateful to Mike Fulford for turning me loose on his site.

ANGELA HARVEY

MALLOWAN'S MEMOIRS

Like any other pursuit or field of study archaeology has its big names among its practitioners: several should come immediately to mind, even to the newest initiate. Some have built reputations on overt showmanship, delighting in the limelight and publicity, revelling in controversiality. Surprisingly then, 'great' archaeologists have on the whole fought shy of chronicling their own lives, notwithstanding the glamour, excitement and fame. Archaeologists' autobiographies therefore tend to be thinly spread on library shelves. Among the few outstanding ones are By Nile and Tigris by Wallis Budge, Flinders Petrie's Seventy Years in Archaeology, Margaret Murray's My First Hundred Years, Sir Mortimer Wheeler wrote Still Digging, O.G.S. Crawford: Said and Done, Sir Leonard Woolley called his Spadework and Joan Evans took a musical title Prelude and Fugue.

Just recently Sir Max Mallowan has added his autobiography, Mallowan's Memoirs. To many this particular life story has a further fascination in that it tells much about his famous detective story writing wife, Dame Agatha Christie, who died only a few months ago. Before she died, she also completed a volume of autobiography which no doubt will shed further light on Sir Max over the forty-five years of their marriage.

A few years ago Sir Max gave a memorable lecture to a packed audience in Reading Town Hall on his excavations at Nimrud in Assyria with wonderful colour slides of the priceless treasures, particularly the carved ivories which adorned the royal furniture.

His work in the Near East on mouth-wateringly spectacular sites including Ur of the Chaldees, working for Leonard Woolley, Nineveh, and later Nimrud, from 1949 to the 1960's, should make splendid fireside reading for all.

Mallowan's Memoirs by Max Mallowan, Collins 1977 £6.95.

BASINGSTOKE RECORDS IN THE HAMPSHIRE RECORD OFFICE

I had meant to write in a general way about the written records in the archives in Winchester, but I have, lately, come upon such an interesting will that I feel I must write about that alone. The will is that of Thomas Lane, mercer, 1532. With his will is the inventory of his goods at the time of his death, taken for tax purposes and kept with his will. The specially nice thing is that I had not expected an inventory, and when the book of wills was set out for me, and I found Thomas Lane, the inventory unfolded and kept on unfolding until it hit the floor because it is seven foolscap sheets long.

The first part of the list gives the things in his shop, and I knew a mercer kept a lot of little oddments, but he had something for everyone: men's shirts, hats of oiled hemp and straw, buckles and clasps, playing cards, matins books and a b c books, sewing silk and ribbons, comfits, ~~spices~~ drugs, oils and salves, pens, ink, glue and quicksilver. This last item (there were seventy in all - I left out a few or this note would hit the floor too) appeared to me to be 'gekselvr' as his spelling is eccentric and I had not thought of mercury as being used in a village in the sixteenth century. The archivist on duty helped me with that but neither of us can fathom 'Osynbryggs hedlak & dyaper', or 'whurmys & cork'.

The rest of the inventory lists the rooms in his house, which were: hall, chamber over the hall, chamber over the shop, chamber over the street door, garret, study, entry, kitchen, brewhouse, warehouse, malt loft and back yard. For each room there were the goods which I suppose were kept

there, although he seems to have had a full set, called a 'garnish' of pewter in his study, and other dishes, pots and some candlesticks, but no furniture. He had five sons and two daughters, a wife and he must have had some servants, but there were only two bedsteads and three truckle beds for the lot of them. One of the beds had a quilt of red and yellow taffeta. In the hall he kept a 'tritrak for the table' which is a backgammon board.

His house was called 'Pomelys' and it was very likely along Brook Street where the Br wery was, because 'Pomelys' became the 'Great Malthouse' of Thomas May.

I have copies of a dozen more, and there are many others to be read, which should last some time. I shall then go back to Court Rolls if I don't get caught up in Rentals, and if anyone else would like to join in, I should love to get other people as addicted as I am. Sorting a word out in a terrible script and twisting it round until it makes sense gives me as much pleasure as cleaning a coin or a pot any day.

ANNE HAWKER

NEWS AND NOTES

The Publicity Sub-Committee is now being run by Les Fawcett who would welcome any offers of help and publicity ideas. Alison Jamieson has agreed to co-ordinate the coffee-making activities at lectures. She would like to set up a rota of makers and washers up. If you don't want to wait to be asked, please volunteer at the next meeting.

In July the Society received a call for help from the County Museum Service to investigate a ditch discovered from the air in 1976 at Chilton Manor, Chilton Candover. Collin Bowen (Royal Commission for Historic Monuments) recognised the feature as a probable bronze age land boundary and approached the landowner, Col. Saville, and asked that a section might be taken. Peter Heath answered the call and with Jonathan Ranger succeeded in completing a section, begun by Col. Saville's gardener (!), and was able to make a section drawing. Nothing was found which could in any way date the site to any period.

A brief questionnaire survey was conducted at the 'Air Photography' lecture on the 29th September to discover the reasons why our proposed Dorset trip didn't have full support. It seems we picked the wrong day for most people. If you were not at the September meeting and deliberately did not book to go to Dorset, the Committee would still like to know why. It could help us not to organise non-starters.
