



BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

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CALENDAR

Saturday 17th June Day Excursion to Dorchester

Saturday 1st July to Excavation at Basing House, directed by
Saturday 22nd July Tim Schadla-Hall, Keeper of Archaeology,
 Hampshire County Museum Service.

Thursday 6th July Annual General Meeting, Chute House, 7.30 p.m.
 To be followed by an archaeological film.

Friday 7th July - Excavation training weekend at Basing House.
Monday 10th July

EXCURSION TO DORCHESTER.

Last September we arranged a coach trip to Dorset which had to be cancelled. Various reasons were given by members for their non-support but it was suspected that the programme, mostly pre-historic earthworks, was too heavy for the average digestion. This year we have based our excursion on Dorchester with what is hoped to be a sufficiently varied and interesting assortment of archaeological and historical places to suit all tastes. A complete itinerary is enclosed with this Newsletter. Please send in your booking form and remittance as early as possible to avoid disappointment.

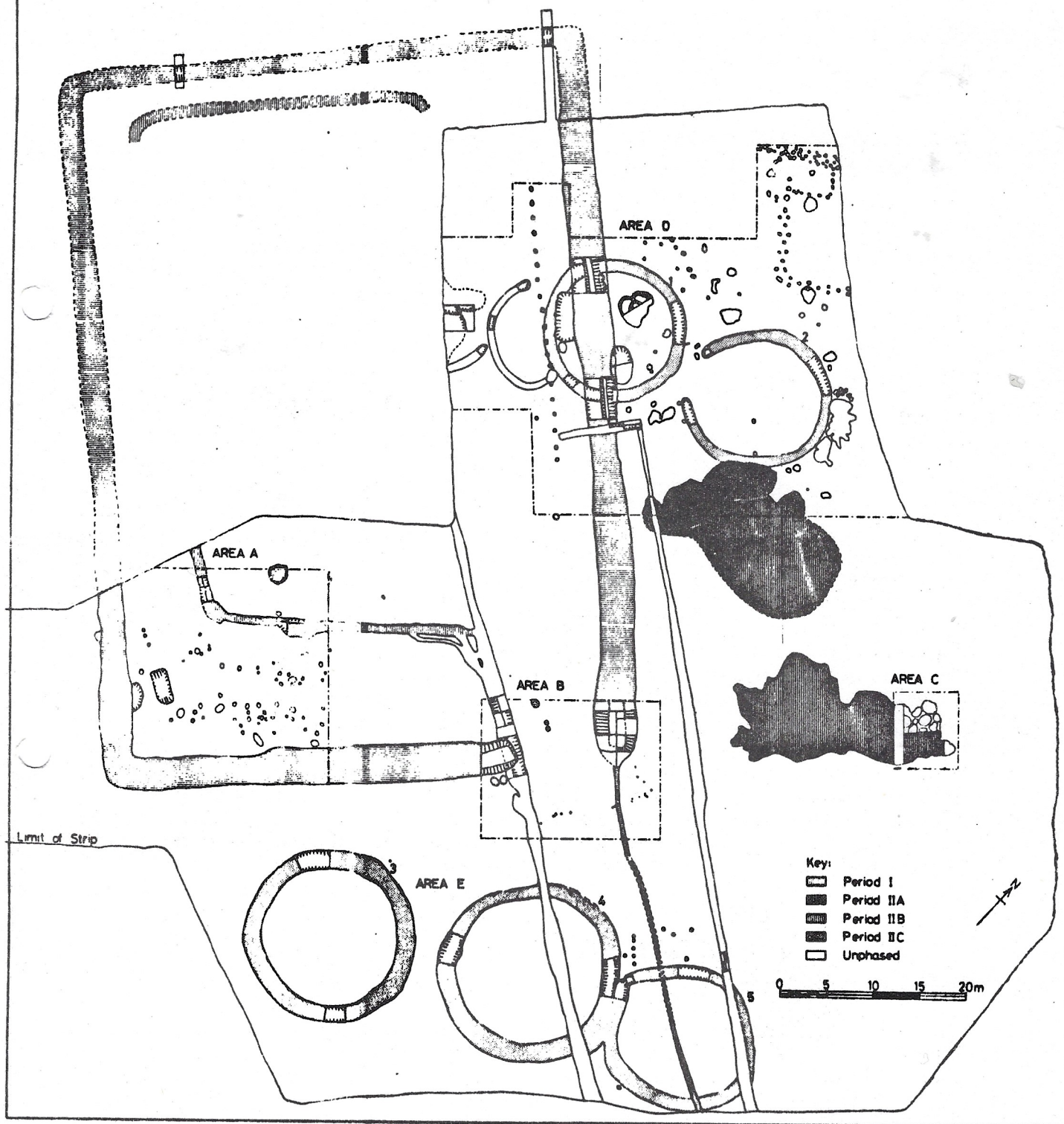
EXCAVATIONS AT COWDERY'S DOWN, BASING, MARCH - MAY 1978. INTERIM REPORT.

Excavations, phased in with the development of the site by Hampshire County Council, were undertaken by the Hampshire County Museum Service and were directed by Martin Millett. The aim was to investigate the features in the area threatened by the road for phase one of the Chineham development. The site had been located by air photography (NMR SU 6553/1-2) during a routine assessment of the site by M. Hughes prior to the development. It was initially thought that the rectangular enclosure (fig. Period IIC) was a gun emplacement known to have been located hereabouts during the siege of Basing House in 1645. This proved not to be the case, and with the exception of a few sherds of 17th century pottery and clay pipe there was no archaeological evidence for this well-documented activity on the site. An area slightly larger than that to be covered by the roads was cleared with a mechanical excavator by the County and five selected areas (A to E on fig.) totalling 5500m² were cleared by hand, planned and the features exposed sampled by excavation. The main sequence is clear although the dating of individual features must await work on the finds. Bearing this limitation in mind the phasing of the site is laid out below.

Period 1. Five ring ditches were examined in Areas D and E, with two sections excavated through each, then ring ditch 3 cleared by machine. Those in Area E were different in character to the two in Area D being deeper and having chalk rubble as the main constituent of their fills in contrast with the predominance of clay in numbers 1 and 2, which were also much shallower. This perhaps suggests a difference in date and/or function. Ring ditches 3, 4 and 5 appear to have been barrows and in the northern section through ring ditch 3 a skeleton was found. It was crouched and faced into the centre of the ring lying just above the primary silt. It was accompanied by three beads (two of bone and one of jet) beneath the head, and a blade behind the back. The bone beads are paralleled at Shrewton Barrow 5 which gives an early Bronze Age date to this burial. The other two ring ditches in Area E overlapped with No. 5 later than No. 4.

The two ring ditches in Area D were shallower and more flat-bottomed with No. 2 also being penannular with its causeway facing No. 1. In some ways this relationship is reminiscent of the relationship between Nos. 4 and 5 in Area E. Ring ditch 1 was cut by a series of later features dating to Period II, and Nos. 4 and 5 were overlain by features of Period IIC and later. This shows that if mounds existed in their centres they had been ploughed away by the end of the first millennium BC at the latest. The two shallow gulleys to the west of ring ditch 1 are probably contemporaneous with it although the stratigraphical relationship has been removed by a later pit.

Cowdery's Down, Basing, 1978: Interim Plan.



Period II. Period II is distinguished from Period I by a change in the nature of the site from one consisting principally of ring ditches and associated features to one consisting of rubbish deposits and post holes indicative of a settlement site. This period of activity can be subdivided into three phases representing changes in the structural nature of the site.

IIA. This phase is represented in two areas by areas of late Bronze/early Iron Age 'quarry pits' or 'working hollows'. The more southerly of these was examined in Area C and produced useful groups of pottery. Undoubtedly some of the post holes and unphased pits in Area D belong to this phase, and an open settlement is suggested. The length of occupation and the possibility of continuity between phase A and B must await work on the finds, although the distribution of features suggests continuity.

IIB. This phase is represented by the enclosure ditch in Area A which appears again to the North-west on the air photographs (see fig.). The ditch was shallow and had been infilled during the 1st century AD/BC on the basis of the pottery and a brooch found in the fill. It appears that the side ditches of this enclosure have been ploughed-out, although a corner entrance may have existed in the South-eastern corner. This phase therefore represents a change from open to enclosed settlement, although the ditch does not suggest any defensive function.

IIC. In this period the enclosure ditch was superseded by a large rectangular enclosure c.50m by 80m with an entrance in the South-eastern corner. The infill of the ditch produced a large quantity of pottery which dates the backfilling to the Romano-British period. There was only a very small quantity of material from the primary silt of the ditch but this suggests that construction must have taken place around the middle of the first century AD. The ditch was variable in profile with a 1.5m deep trench shape near the gate with a wide flat bottom. On the eastern side however the ditch was much shallower with the top dug to the full width but the ditch then stepped-in and only a narrow trench going deeper. This smaller ditch coincides with a line of post holes which stand c.4m back from the ditch. This suggests that the enclosure was not completed as originally planned whether for lack of time, resources or inclination. The enclosure as a whole must be seen as defensive although the interior has been badly ploughed with post holes only surviving in the part of Area A where the chalk was originally protected from ploughing by the bank of the enclosure.

The pottery from this ditch, and from a contemporaneous pit in Area A is of interest in itself with the native wares, presumably locally produced, accompanied by a significant proportion of higher quality wares including pre-Flavian fine wares and locally made stamped imitations of Gallo-Belgic types. These occur with only a small assemblage of samian ware. This rather unusual assemblage seems to suggest a site of some status, although the proximity to the Roman Road and Silchester may explain the pattern.

Unphased Features. Two major groups of features are unphased on the present evidence. Firstly running across the site North-west/South-east are two major ditches which are seen as field boundaries. These are on the same orientation as the gulley which runs off the Period IIC ditch. They both produced Romano-British pottery although they may be medieval. The boundaries appear to continue the line of a trackway which used the Period IIC enclosure entrance. Secondly at the northern end of Area D a large rectangular structure appears to have been attached to a fence line. The structure is reminiscent of Anglo-Saxon halls although its position suggests a Period II context.

MARTIN MILLETT

LLOYDS BANK FUND FOR INDEPENDENT ARCHAEOLOGISTS

We reported in Newsletter 46 that we had applied for a grant of £200 to the Lloyds Bank Fund which had been set up to aid amateur groups and societies such as ours. We are now pleased to report that the Society has been awarded £150 to replace equipment and received "thanks for your Society's valuable work".

VILLAGE PONDS

The modern agricultural trend of grubbing out hedgerows seems to be accompanied by the filling in of many of the ponds around the area. At Cliddesden the village pond survives, with a thriving duck population. Also, at Farleigh Wallop and Oakley, the village ponds have been dredged and tidied. This has left them looking a little like next door's fibreglass fishpond, but I feel sure nature will soon make them less artificial-looking, if allowed to. The main thing is they survive much as they have done for centuries.

The latest local pond to be filled in is between the Beech Arms and the Deane Gate on the B.3400 west of Basingstoke. True this pond is without water for most of the year, but when the River Test is in Spring flood it is soon full. If it was not for the pond, the road would be flooded.

There are too many ponds which have disappeared to list. When they are filled in the type of filling does not usually enhance the local scenery. The village pond at Worting, for instance, boasted a water trough and a village pump. In this case road widening was the main factor for filling it in. It would seem the landscaping afterwards was certainly never given a thought.

Hannington had maybe one of the largest village ponds in the area. (Note the old local saying 'Hannington Dockyard'.) This was filled in several years ago and, being in the centre of the village, a better job of infilling was done, plus the help of nature over the years.

Many of the farms had a pond near the farm itself, with dew ponds around the fields. All had an abundance of toads, frogs, newts and small water fowl.

Several ponds were dug for a specific purpose. Behind a row of old thatched cottages that used to stand near Overton, a pond was made mainly for the prevention of fire. A pond's main function was the watering of animals, but I feel sure many a steam tractor or steam lorry drew up to these watering places just in time to replenish their thirsty tanks!

A visit to Dummer shows one how the village pond is trying to survive, with a few ducks and dab chicks splashing in the few inches of muddy water. But instead of water plants around the edge, garden rubbish and old oil drums spring forth. True a pond can be a dangerous place, but on recall we had great fun in and around the one near us years ago. But the only remaining evidence now is a street sign saying 'Pond Close'.

RICHARD RUSHANT ORAM

Richard has touched on a subject little mentioned in archaeological papers, but it is obvious that early man had to rely on springs, rivers and ponds for his water supply. It is very doubtful that prehistoric societies before the Iron Age would have used any form of artificial supply. It is probable, however, that the pond is the first artificial device and some farm

and village ponds, like land boundaries, may have an extremely long history. Hilltop settlements, particularly on the chalk, if they have pre-Saxon origins, are possible sources. In Cranbourne Chase, Dorset, the village of Ashmore is built round an embanked pond which could be at least Romano-British. On the whole most ponds in villages, or close to farms, are hardly likely to be earlier than Saxon or medieval.

Dewponds could be older, even Iron-Age, but most ~~that~~ remain are modern. They were constructed, rather than naturally formed, on beds of straw and puddled clay, covered by a band of loose flints and with chalk banks. Again these occur mostly on the chalk hills.

Some years ago while digging the Iron-Age hillfort at Baulksbury, Andover, a large circular feature was carefully excavated in the belief that it was a round-house. It was not until pieces of bicycle, mouthorgan and a plastic spoon were recovered from the primary silt that it was realised that a dewpond had been stumbled upon.

The Romans dug spring ponds to reach the water table. These show up today as deep embanked pits. A good example is in Wiltshire near Pewsey. There is another pond of suspected Roman date on Farley Heath in Surrey. A local spring pond mentioned by O.G.S. Crawford is at Cold Henley, close to the Whitchurch-Kingsclere road.

In medieval times ponds abounded in the fields as well as the villages, probably for watering animals. Furthermore, streams were often widened to form fish ponds. A possible local example of one such pond is at Newnham which only collects water in the wettest of weathers.

O.G.S. Crawford¹ noted the significance of ponds particularly as they occurred as reference points in Anglo-Saxon land charters. Three words are commonly used which are interpreted as ponds or springs: seath which is the same as the modern word seethe, meaning to boil up; sol, a muddy, wallowing place for animals (soil); and pol. Crawford cites Ceacgan Seath as "the source of the stream which rises at Sydmonton and flows north by Ecchinswell to join the Enborne near Hedley". Also bulloces sol (AD 900) on the parish boundary of Woodmancott midway between Winchester and Basingstoke. Pol is obviously pool.

Crawford also throws light on the word pond, suggesting that it only became associated with water after the Norman Conquest. Originally the word meant pound or animal pen. but the Normans pounded water by dams to form fish ponds and mill ponds. Hence its modern sense.

¹Archaeology in the Field, O.G.S. Crawford, 1960.

BASINGSTOKE BUILDINGS

An interesting item appears incidentally in the Hampshire Field Club Newsletter No.9 in a report from the Hampshire Record Office. Thanks are accorded to voluntary helpers for their assistance with cataloguing backlogs of documents. Among them is reference to the "listing of some 2,000 plans of new and altered buildings in Basingstoke, 1878-1934".

BRITISH HERALDRY EXHIBITION

Visitors to the British Museum for Mr. Davies' excellent conducted tour of the Egyptian galleries had the opportunity also to visit the exhibition on heraldry in the British Museum Special Exhibitions Gallery.

The exhibition follows the historical development of heraldry in Britain from its origins in the 12th century through its increasingly elaborate use in illuminated manuscripts, metalwork, ceramics, textiles, jewellery, brasses and stained glass to about 1800. It is one of the largest and most important exhibitions in British heraldry ever mounted. Admission is free and there are free lectures based around the exhibition. It closes on the 27th August.

VANISHING VICTORIANA

I know this Society is concerned mostly with 'dirt archaeology' but perhaps I may be allowed a few lines to praise a book about 'undirt' archaeology. It is a thin, well illustrated book by Lucinda Lambton about "Vanishing Victoriana" published by Elsevier Phaidon, £4.95. 1976 She obviously loves her subjects. Decorative detail - beautiful tiles, ironwork, porches, (do you recall Liptons' tiles for example, shamrocks intertwined with £s, £s for Liptons, £s for sterling), butchers' shops with tiles, street furniture, good old postboxes, mileposts, the beautiful ironwork at Abbey Mills pumping station, Stratford, London, and at Papplewick, Notts, even Pell Road, Reading, with its elaborate brickwork on the small houses. She kicks British Rail hard (and I jolly well agree with her, or anyone who kicks British Rail) for their vandalism to their property! Graves - did you know Highgate Cemetery has had to be closed because of vandalism? Pubs, restaurants - and my favourite subject - public loo's, all come in for commentary and illustrations. She really cares and her 'conclusions' chapter sums up all I feel about the modernisation and destruction of a lot of attractive Victoriana around us, but haven't been able to put so concisely.

All in all, a book I'd like to own, to look at frequently and which would remind me of the things that are disappearing daily, unnoticed.

JOSIE WALL
