



# BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

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### CALENDAR

Thursday 30th November	<u>'Mediaeval Floor Tiles in Hampshire'</u> Lecture by Mrs. Elizabeth Eames, Department of Mediaeval Antiquities, British Museum. Chute House, Basingstoke. 7.30 p.m.
Saturday 9th December	'Education for Industrial Archaeology' One-day course, 2.30 - 5.00 p.m. University of Southampton, Department of Adult Education. Fee £1.00
Monday 18th December	BBC2 Chronicle 'Alice Holt Potteries' (see page 2).
Saturday 6th January	<u>Excursion to the Bodleian Library and Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.</u> (see page 4)
Wednesday 10th January	Norse Settlement in the Northern Isles of Scotland. Lecture by Dr. Anne Ritchie. University of Southampton 'Aspects of Antiquity Series'. 7.30 p.m.

## MEDIAEVAL FLOOR TILES IN HAMPSHIRE

As predicted in Newsletter 49, Gustav Milne's lecture last month on the waterfront project was very well attended. His excellent, lively and light-hearted presentation, crammed full of fascinating and absorbing detail, fully repaid everyone's effort to be there. We stay with the mediaeval period for our November lecture, but from a totally different viewpoint.

Floortiles of baked red clay mixed with sand were popular for internal use in England throughout the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, but more especially during the thirteenth and fourteenth. Often they were given an ornamental inlay of white-ish clay which, when glazed and fired, produced a yellow design against the red background. Designs were usually impressed into the soft clay with a pattern carved in relief into a flat wooden block. A later development was introduced by first dipping the wood block into a clay slip which printed the design onto the tiles, but this method produced a less durable surface. Tile patterns were either complete in themselves or were intended to be laid in groups of four to sixteen.

Although they were glazed they had to withstand the heavy daily wear and tear of floors, so most have been destroyed. Because they were more commonly used in religious houses the majority which have survived have been found in the floors of our churches and cathedrals, but they were also associated with domestic architecture, especially royal or court buildings.

Hampshire has a wealth of surviving floortiles throughout the entire county. Notably, the floor of the retro-choir of Winchester Cathedral contains probably the finest extant example anywhere in Britain of how a mediaeval church floor really looked. Also, Winchester College has significant examples which are important because their survival, in common with the College account roles among the College archives, recording the purchase and laying of tiles, enables their dating to be done more accurately than could be achieved from the analysis of stylistic changes alone.

As with brickmaking, the production of tiles was highly local. By chance a place with the right type of clay and adequate transport facilities, either water or road, might become the centre of a small but flourishing industry whose influence might be only a few miles or hundreds. Nearby examples of such are Newbury, whose tiles were used in the early fifteenth century to pave, among other rooms, the Library of Winchester College; and Farnham, whose fine, white pipe-clays were taken for their suitability for the inlaid ornamentation.

Inlaid tile designs are equally diverse and compelling, their subjects ranging from heraldic devices through ecclesiastical symbols, royal and religious emblems to birds, animals and flowers, crowned heads and geometrical patterns.

Elizabeth Eames is a world-famous authority on tiles and her 'Mediaeval Tiles: a handbook' (British Museum, 1968) is a standard text for all students of the subject. She has given numerous lectures but never on the Hampshire tiles alone and she is delighted to be given the opportunity to talk about them. We are both honoured and privileged that she should come to us to do so. Again this will be a popular lecture with wide general appeal. Please come early.

Thursday 30th November 7.30 p.m. Chute House (Clennell Room, first floor).

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### VISIT TO THE ABBOTSTONE DOWN EXCAVATION

About two dozen members of the Society met at Abbotstone on the 21st October, on a glorious autumn afternoon, to visit Richard Whinney's trial excavations. Richard Whinney, Assistant Rescue Archaeologist for the Winchester District, was there to meet us and show us his site. As explained in the previous Newsletter, the chief interest in the site lay in the fact that it has only been deep ploughed twice and part of it is under permanent pasture. The first impression for many of us was the familiarity of the site - the depth of soil, coloration, ditch sections, etc., just like those at Ructstalls or Viabes, and the evidence recovery seemed to be similar. However, this year's trenches did not include the centre of settlement which is thought to be on a low mound in the field and which will be looked at next year - it may be that the survival of the habitation levels will be better on a little ploughed site. It is significant that no remains of any banks - the upcast from the ditches - could be found, not even a concentration of chalk in the topsoil which would have remained after so little ploughing. It seems that this site had no banks associated with its ditches and there were no postholes for a palisade either. Without a bank or fence, the ditches would not be sufficient to enclose stock, which has always been assumed as their function. Mr. Whinney intends to follow some ditches into the adjacent woodland where sometimes earthworks survive. It may be that Abbotstone Down will offer new interpretations of the nature and functions of the ditches which are so common on Iron Age sites.

### CONGRATULATIONS TO MALCOLM LYNE AND ROSEMARY JEFFERIES

All Society members will be familiar with the work of the Alice Holt Pottery Research Group, led by Malcolm Lyne and Rosemary Jefferies, either through Malcolm's lecture on their work last winter, or through visiting their excavations or experimental firings. Over the past few years, they have been excavating an extremely complicated kiln site, with eleven superimposed kilns dating from 250 AD back to 90 AD. At the same time, they have conducted a programme of experimental kiln building and firing, using local materials and clays, aimed at producing the perfectly reduced shiny grey standard Alice Holt Roman pot. Information from the excavation - for example fire shapes, was used in the experimental firings which, after five attempts, reached their target.

The Group entered their work for the Chronicle Award and, it has just been announced, have been given first prize. The whole story can be seen on December 18th in a special Chronicle programme. Congratulations Malcolm, Rosemary and everyone involved in the project: we shall all be watching on December 18th!

P.S. The excavations are still continuing if anyone would like to help.

### OXFORD UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL STUDIES 'INTRODUCTION TO ARCHAEOLOGY'

Why not come along to Reading and join the group lectures 'Introduction to Archaeology' A very useful course, as all the group are finding. We are a varied lot, by no means all 'archaeological types' or 'academics' - just a common interest in how one goes about discovering the past. We have housewives, mechanics, engineers, salesmen, office workers, retired people,

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teachers, a scientist and a meteorologist, to name but a few. Members of three local archaeological groups are also with us. The group numbers about 28 people, though for business reasons some weeks we are down to 20.

What do we hear about? Well, the season started with general lectures and questions about archaeology. We were introduced to a very comprehensive book list, with information about which books were easy and which more specialised. Very grateful for that we were! The library is optional, but Miss Bowen, B.A., our lecturer, is very helpful with books and has a weekly library for those who wish to partake (with Group Librarian). We can take home up to three books, keeping them 2-3 weeks if we require. We were also requested to take notes if we could manage it, but this is quite easy, Miss Bowen lectures very clearly, and is organised with names written on the blackboard. We are also occasionally given printed sheets with useful information for later perusal. We have between 10-30 slides and pictures each evening to illuminate lectures, which makes things very much clearer.

Well, all this allowed us to settle in, get to know each other, and get more familiar with archaeological ideas. And from this start we went on to the history 'past to present' of archaeology. We learnt there are now various departments to consider, field archaeology being only one, though very important, and learnt the names of the doyens and mandarins who pioneered the new departments and attitudes.

At present the lectures are concentrated on where to dig and what to do with it when it's dug up, and what one should do before one starts to dig! The lectures are very interesting. Why not join us?

Peggy Drury

CONFERENCE ON THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF HAMPSHIRE  
FROM THE STONE AGE TO THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The stated aim of this Conference, held at Southampton University 10th-12th November, was to give an up-to-date expert account of Hampshire archaeology, to an audience of local amateurs. In 23 lectures packed into the time, it proved something of a marathon, the comprehensive survey being almost too much to take in. However, the quality of lectures was uniformly high and thought provoking - it was very unfortunate that shortage of time cut discussion to a minimum.

To summarise such a full conference is a near impossibility, and the items I mention are a personal selection. I think everyone was impressed by the contributions on the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods and by the amount of new information which is coming to light. Dr. Clive Gamble described the excavation of an Acheulian flintworking site at Red Barns, Portchester, where the implements rejected and left on the flintworking floor give us a picture of Palaeolithic man exacting certain standards and quality controls on the tools he was producing. Dr. Roger Jacobi described recent fieldwork in the Mesolithic period, and particularly the exciting site at Broom Hill, Braishfield, which, as well as a very large collection of flint material, has yielded Mesolithic houses of a fairly substantial type which with smaller structures from Wakeford's Copse have been tentatively interpreted as winter and summer residences. Objects of non-local stone (slate and Portland chert) suggest contact with more distant groups of people, and is the earliest evidence of trade.

This contrasted quite markedly with the gloomy picture of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages as drawn by Tim Schadla-Hall, highlighting the lack of

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settlement sites, and the gradual destruction of the barrows which are the only real source of evidence for these periods. Peter Fasham shed a little hope in his account of sites recovered by chance during his work on the line of the M3 motorway.

The picture is, of course, quite different for the Iron Age and Roman periods, with many sites known and many important excavations in recent years (46 for the Iron Age alone) some of which were briefly described at the Conference - Winklebury Hillfort by Ken Smith, Hayling Island Temple by David Rudkin, and the dual programme of excavation and experiment on a Roman kiln site in the Alice Holt Forest by Malcolm Lyne: his final slide of the experimental pots, fired to a perfect likeness of their Roman predecessors was greeted by a spontaneous burst of applause and proved one of the highlights of the Conference.

The work which has been done in urban archaeology by the Archaeological Units at Winchester and Southampton is important not only nationally, but internationally too, and there were contributions from Phil Holdsworth and Ken Qualmann describing the most recent work at these two sites. Perhaps one of the most significant papers for local societies such as ours was that given by Dr. Steve Shennan on the settlement of East Hampshire as illustrated by the results of planned field walking. A sample of this area - between Alton and Petersfield, where little previous work has been done - was walked by volunteers and by youngsters employed under the Job Creation Scheme and the 'before' and 'after' maps of settlement distribution were truly impressive, especially for the early prehistoric periods. Present county distribution patterns tend to reflect the work of individuals, and societies, particularly on the chalk lands and around Winchester, or of recent redevelopment, such as our own area: this kind of controlled sampling, across all the geological boundaries would provide a useful corrective, it is a comparatively inexpensive way of gaining much more accurate knowledge, and is a way in which the local society can make a really useful contribution, as was stressed by several speakers.

I have missed out a great deal - including the very interesting contributions on the environmental evidence - but I hope I have included enough to substantiate Professor Renfrew's summary at the end of the Conference - that Archaeology is alive and well and living in Hampshire! The eight members of the Society who attended some or all of the Conference had an enjoyable, if exhausting weekend, and perhaps they, and some of those who could not be present, will be glad to know that the papers will be published, hopefully by next Easter, which will provide a valuable addition to the library of anyone interested in Hampshire archaeology.

#### DAY EXCURSION TO OXFORD

Our Committee is organising a coach trip to Oxford on Saturday 6th January, 'Twelfth Night'. We are hoping to visit the famous Bodleian Library in the morning with its many treasures of early printing and binding. For lunch we shall book tables at a nearby restaurant so that we can eat together as a party. In the afternoon we will take in the Ashmolean Museum which has wonderful collections of antiquities from every age and part of Europe, the Aegian and Egypt. Among its other varied collections are bronzes, ivories, snuffboxes, watches and the famous Hill collection of musical instruments.

The cost for the day trip including lunch is expected to be around £4.00 per person. Those wishing to make provisional bookings for themselves and their friends are asked to complete the attached slip and return it to Richard Searle, 8 Band Hall Place, Hook, Basingstoke, by the 15th December at the latest.

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Most of this issue of our Newsletter has been written and contributed by Mary Oliver. Contributions from others are always welcome.