



# BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

Number 51      January 1979

### CONTENTS

Excavations at Cowdery's Down, Basing, 1978  
Visit to Oxford  
Social Evening  
Local Publications  
Friends of the Willis  
Left to Rot

### CALENDAR

• Thursday 25th January      Excavations at Cowdery's Down, Basing, 1978

Lecture by Mr. Martin Millett, Merton College,  
Oxford. Chute House, Basingstoke, 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 31st January      The World's First Architecture - the Prehistoric  
Cairns of Brittany. Lecture by Prof. P.R. Giot,  
University of Rennes, Brittany. 'Aspects of  
Antiquity', University of Southampton, Physics A  
Building, 7.30 p.m.

Friday 2nd - Sunday  
4th February      Recent Archaeological Work in the Channel  
Islands. Non-residential weekend conference,  
University of Southampton, Boldrewood (Wessex  
Medical) Building, Burgess Road. Fee £6.00.  
Department of Adult Education.

Saturday 17th February      Roman Lamps. (A Practical Course on two linked  
(and 3rd March)      Saturdays.) Southampton College of Art, East  
Park Terrace. Fee £6.00. University of  
Southampton, Department of Adult Education.

## EXCAVATIONS AT COWDERY'S DOWN, BASING, 1978

So much has been written about the archaeology of Cowdery's Down already, in previous Newsletters, that Martin Millett's work for the Hampshire County Museum Service, last Spring and again last October, needs little introduction. His own interim report appeared in our pages in Newsletter No.47, June 1978, and would serve admirably as a reminder of the site's principal features.

Martin's lecture will concentrate mainly on the work so far completed but will also touch on next Summer's return to the site when it is hoped to prove whether or not there was Saxon occupation on the top of the hill. Not yet ruled out, of course, is the possibility of finding positive evidence of Civil War date: the reason for digging there in the first place!

Over the intervening months since last Spring a faithful few have washed, sorted and labelled the many bagsful of flint, bone, pottery and metalwork on Wednesday evenings at the Willis Museum. Thanks to this effort Martin can begin his 1979 season without any backlog from last year. (Although the Cowdery's Down material is finished we still have some sorting and boxing of the bone and pottery from Viabes Farm to do. Can you help? Wednesday evenings 7.45 p.m.)

All in all this Society has contributed much to the Cowdery's Down dig, both on site and off it, and we hope that we can go on contributing in 1979.

The Clennell Room (upstairs), Chute House, Basingstoke, 25th January, 7.30 p.m.

## VISIT TO OXFORD

A number of different circumstances prevented us from visiting Oxford on the 6th January. Because numbers were down we could not hire a coach for the day and a probable petrol shortage, combined with the worst of the winter weather, deterred most drivers from taking their own cars. Incidentally, parking in Oxford on a Saturday can be a nightmare even if one is prepared for a long walk into the city centre.

Not to be put off entirely, we hope to re-organise a visit to Oxford in the Spring when we hope to have sufficient support to hire the coach.

While on the subject of outings, the Committee would welcome suggestions for the summer excursions. Ideas so far include St. Albans, Oxfordshire, or Gloucestershire (Belas Knapp, Chedworth etc.). We stand more chance of filling coaches if we select the places you actually want to visit, so please come forward with positive proposals.

## SOCIAL EVENING

Usually around Christmas, we hold a social evening with 'Links with the Past'. Often this has clashed with other functions taking place on the same evening resulting in our competing for support. In an attempt to find a less hectic period in our calendars we have booked Thursday 1st March for our Social.



## LOCAL PUBLICATIONS

Your Chairman and Secretary recently attended a meeting in Basingstoke to discuss the possibility of co-operation between local societies concerned with local history, archaeology, geology and natural history in publishing booklets on local subjects.

We were in unanimous agreement that there is a positive need for inexpensive, short, popular accounts of all subjects from broad topics such as archaeological or historical period guides, and handbooks to the local flora, fauna and geology, to more specific topics like local industries, buildings and personalities. Although intended for fairly local consumption we felt that their scope should not be confined to the geographical boundaries of the Basingstoke Borough area, but could include publications of more widely ranging interests but retaining a local flavour.

It was felt that there is an immediate market for such publications, particularly among school children and teachers who have difficulty in obtaining up-to-date local source material for projects. Also, the general public would respond to a uniform series of booklets provided the standard was sufficiently high without their being too specialised or erudite.

The idea is a good one but if it is to bear fruit we need authors to write the booklets and to do the preliminary research. Already there are people preparing studies which could be suitable candidates for the first titles but we need more. If you feel you could devote some time and energy to preparing a local topic for publication - and remember what is wanted are short, popular accounts - we would be pleased to hear from you. If you know of source material that could be worked on to provide a suitable subject for publication we would also like to know, together with your ideas for subjects you think might be worth someone's time researching. Suggestions to Barbara Applin or Richard Searle please.

## FRIENDS OF THE WILLIS

Shortly before Christmas another new organisation came into being, The Friends of the Willis Museum, with four stated aims and objectives. Firstly they set out to encourage the use of the Basingstoke Willis Museum by the public at large. They also encourage an interest in the history and development of the Basingstoke area. Another stated aim is their concern 'to develop museum collections and make the Museum a pleasant and encouraging place for people to visit and view at all times'. Finally they aim to present regular lectures at the Museum on topics pertinent to the Museum and its collections and to organise excursions to places of similar interest. A six-monthly list of events and lecture programme will be circulated to all members. Like this Society they have a range of subscriptions: from £3.50 for joint membership, £2.50 for ordinary membership and £1.00 for students and young people.

While we wish them every success, one cannot but wonder how so many separate organisations in Basingstoke can hope to survive independently with such similar interests. Already most offer their members lectures and excursions, but there is always a limit to the number of functions and events to which each member will go. Furthermore there is a limit to the number of organisations to which each is prepared to pay a subscription to join. Societies in Basingstoke already compete for their members. Unless we tailor our activities to meet wider and differing audiences we must expect the competition to become fiercer, with obvious consequences.

## LEFT TO ROT

Archaeologists and historians alike should be concerned as much for the remains above the soil as for those below. All too often archaeologists can be blamed for paying too little attention to standing buildings. But a recent survey conducted for the periodical 'Architects' Journal' by the organisation which calls itself Save Britain's Heritage has demonstrated that much of Britain's architectural heritage is being left quite literally to rot, but not by the archaeologists.

The major problem is the convenient loophole through which the unscrupulous property owner can see to it that any building in his possession, whether listed as a historic building or not, can be allowed to decay. There are buildings of all types, shapes and sizes of varying degrees of antiquity, owned by local authorities, property developers, banks, insurance companies and private individuals, and so on, which are being allowed, often quite deliberately, to become derelict and as a result are pulled down.

There is elaborate machinery by which historic buildings can be listed for preservation and once listed it is virtually impossible for an owner to gain permission to knock one down or even alter, convert or extend one. But neglect needs no-one's permission. Once a building has been allowed to decay other agencies, such as the weather and vandalism, quickly contribute to ensure that it becomes unsafe. Only a few rare and spectacular cases of buildings actually falling down come to the attention of the press and news media, but unsafe buildings being pulled down by developers and local authorities unfortunately are a commonplace, too frequent and unnewsworthy to warrant publicity. The Ancient Monuments Society are quoted as the source for the statistic that almost two out of every three applications in 1977 for permission to demolish were on the grounds of unsafe condition.

The report, which is liberally illustrated with sickening photographs taken before, during and after decay and demolition have taken place, mentions numerous instances from local authorities and amenity groups where buildings, not all historically important but nonetheless sound structures, have been willfully allowed to disappear.

Action is obviously needed to control and prevent the senseless and wasteful destruction and the report makes several positive recommendations. There are many buildings worthy of being rescued but our main concern is that in future decay should not be permitted to start or should be tackled effectively before it is advanced.

Left to Rot: a special SAVE report. Architects Journal 22 November, 1978 p987-1002.

The Headquarters Library of the Department of the Environment has recently published a select bibliography entitled Historic Buildings: conservation. Its several sections include historical background reading lists on buildings and building materials. It presents a useful and extensive reading list on the conservation and restoration of historic buildings based on the stocks of the DoE libraries.

Copies may be obtained from The Library, The Department of the Environment, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3EB, priced 50p.

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