



BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

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CALENDAR

Thursday 29th March Exploring Archives
Lecture by Mr. Roger Davey,
Assistant County Archivist
Hampshire Record Office.
Joint meeting with Basingstoke Industrial
Archaeology Group and Willis Historical
Society.

13th-22nd April Digging in Alton with Martin Millett

Saturday 21st April Excursion to Oxford.

EXPLORING ARCHIVES

It has been our practice over the past seven or eight years to make our March lecture a joint meeting with the Basingstoke Industrial Archaeology Group. With some success we have tried to find speakers who would attract audiences from the members of both societies with subjects of mutual interest. This year we have extended our invitation to the Willis Historical Society also.

At first glance this might seem to have made the choice of speaker an even bigger problem, but the one thing which unites the interests of all three groups in their common pursuit of antiquity, above or below ground, in the context of the Basingstoke area, is the documentary evidence: the written record.

Local records are the very stuff of local historians whatever their particular speciality might be, from the effects of national events on local affairs, or vice versa, to the letters, accounts and private papers of local personalities. Similarly, no industrial archaeologist can divorce his fascination with manufacture, trade, communication and structure from the plans, designs, balance sheets and pattern books which chronicle their evolution. For the archaeologist looking for sites or preparing for an excavation, early maps, estate plans, land use records and charters provide valuable evidence of activities which may have disturbed or altered the land surface in more recent times. To many, however, the contemplation of historical documents or archives can be off-putting. Often they are dismissed as being stuffy and boring or as requiring specialist knowledge to read and interpret them.

In an attempt to dispel some of the mystique which surrounds the subject of archives, to tell us what types of documents exist and to demonstrate that it is possible to explore them both for fun and research we have invited Roger Davey, Assistant County Archivist, to address us on March 29th. He has been asked specifically to show us how amateurs without extensive prior knowledge of old handwriting, legal jargon and officialism can work among the archive collections, at least the relatively recent ones, and achieve considerable results.

Thursday 29th March, Chute House, Basingstoke. 7.30 p.m.

HAMPSHIRE RECORD OFFICE

The following timely notice recently received from the Hampshire Record Office is printed below as it will be of immediate relevance to anyone intending to make the journey to Winchester to consult their archives.

"Hampshire Record Office, Phase II of Conversion of St. Thomas' Church

In March 1979, the building work will start for the completion of the conversion of the church into a Record Office. The work is expected to last about eighteen months and while it is going on, the main Reading Room and offices of the Hampshire Record Office will be transferred to Westgate House in Trafalgar Street, Winchester. The catalogues, indexes, library and microfilm readers will also be moved to Westgate House. The move will start on Monday, March 12th and it is expected to take only a few days. The Reading Rooms will not be closed, but readers are requested to try and avoid visiting the Record Office during the week. We apologise in advance for the inevitable inconvenience and disturbance.

While the building work is in progress, the records will continue to be stored in the present strong rooms. Documents, except maps, needed for consultation, will have to be brought every day to Westgate House, and returned to Southgate Street each evening. There can only be two or three deliveries each day, so in order to avoid long delays waiting for documents to be produced, readers are asked to let us know one day in advance of a proposed visit and to give

details as far as possible of the records which they will wish to consult. Maps, and a few other large documents, cannot be taken to Westgate House, and will be produced by arrangement in the present map room in Southgate Street. This room will be subject to noise and dirt, though a screen will be erected to protect it from the worst of the effect of the building works. The outside doors will be locked, and it will be necessary to ring the outside bell for admittance to the Map Room.

Letters should continue to be addressed to the Hampshire Record Office, 20 Southgate Street, Winchester, SO23 9EF. The telephone number (Winchester 63153) will also remain unchanged. We regret that there will be no car parking space at Westgate House, but the Tower Street multistorey car park is very close. There will be no parking space by the office in Southgate Street. It will not normally be possible to carry out photocopying orders immediately; there may have to be at least one day's delay.

Saturday Morning Opening We will endeavour to continue our programme of Saturday morning opening during the building operations. The map room in the Record Office at Southgate Street will be used. It will not be possible to provide duplicate indexes and lists in the map room, so please have the references ready in advance or order the documents the previous day. One microfilm reader will be available, but films must be ordered by 4.00 p.m. the previous day. We regret this curtailment of our services, but it cannot be avoided. No car parking space will be available.

Note: the Reading Room is opened on the second and fourth Saturday each month, except before a Bank Holiday.

Opening Hours: From Monday March 12th 1979 until further notice the opening hours for the Reading Rooms will be as follows:

Monday to Thursday:	9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.
Friday:	9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.
Saturday:	9.00 a.m. to 11.55 a.m.

These arrangements may have to be altered at short notice if unforeseen problems arise. "

SILCHESTER

The Roman town site at Silchester has been in the news again lately.

Readers of the Newsletter whose memories go back to issue number 41, October 1977, will recall a scheme for selling off small plots of land there, the proceeds of which would be used to finance excavations, set up a museum and establish a trust to administer them. The project was given a decidedly mixed reception at the time and, in the event, few people actually came forward with their deposits for buying plots. This negative position brings us to the current revival of interest in the site.

Hampshire County Council has just announced that negotiations are well advanced for the purchase of the site for preservation as an ancient monument within their care. The area to be bought includes the whole of the scheduled part and the farm. The Department of the Environment is giving financial assistance including the purchase of a bungalow for a resident warden to live in. It is expected that the County Council will attempt to make economic use of the site either by letting it to tenant farmers or by farming it themselves. Whoever farms there, there will be no further ploughing as it will all be turned over to pasture for dairy use.

For many years the Department of the Environment, and its predecessors, has been engaged on repair and conservation work to the walls. This will continue as before.

Many people will sigh with relief and satisfaction at this outcome but one thing which will be lost is the idea of a trust to control and oversee the excavation and establishment of a site museum. Mike Fulford will probably continue to carry out small scale excavations for Reading University, but the potential full-scale excavation which the trust would have administered will probably never be realised now.

Reading Museum has raised sufficient money to buy the existing Silchester collection, already housed there, so it seems unlikely that a museum worthy of the name will ever be established on the site.

If anyone is regretful that these opportunities are to be lost, it is more than a little comforting to know that Calleva will at last be protected from the plough and the treasure hunter.

BILLS TO HELP ARCHAEOLOGY

Two new Bills have recently been introduced in the House of Lords which, if finally enacted, will benefit archaeology. The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Bill, a Government measure, provides for compulsory acquisition of important archaeological sites and monuments where the owner neglectfully allows them to fall into decay and refuses maintenance help. Compulsory purchase by the Government would secure guardianship and conservation. This Bill also proposes a statutory right of access by archaeologists to selected sites scheduled for development. Builders and developers will be forced to allow archaeologists access for up to six months. One further welcome provision of this Bill, which has been through its second reading, would be a ban on metal detectors without consent at protected sites and monuments. The Ramblers Association is pressing for ancient trackways to be included within the Bill's definition of ancient monuments. This seems a feasible suggestion in view of the way some trackways are being taken over by motorcyclists.

A private Bill introduced by Lord Abinger and sponsored by the Council for British Archaeology, sets out to abolish the law of treasure trove. For some 700 years it has been a coroner's duty to decide whether treasure hoards are the property of the Crown or the owner of the land on which they are found. One of the effects of this Bill will be to do away with this duty by abolishing the principle of animus revertendi, the question whether the treasure was simply lost by its former owner or hidden by him with the intention of recovery later. The Bill would also deny the finder of any treasure the right to a reward normally paid if the treasure is judged to belong to the Crown. Instead it would go to the land owner. Gold and silver objects found on or in the ground without a known owner would become automatically the property of the Crown. Failure to report such a find would also become an offence.

If this Bill becomes law it will affect the thousands of metal detector owners who hope to make a profitable business from finding valuable objects, especially gold and silver coins on archaeological sites.

EXCAVATIONS CALLING FOR HELP

Malcolm Lyne, of Alice Holt pottery kilns fame, is calling for volunteers to a rescue dig on a Roman site at a sand pit just west of Kingsley, off the B3004, between Alton and Farnham. Weekend diggers are urgently needed. If you want to ask first before turning up, ring 01-629-8434 Ext 22 and ask for Malcolm.

Martin Millett would like some help from any volunteers at Easter in the centre of Alton. Further details from Richard Searle nearer Easter.
