



# BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

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### CALENDAR

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Thursday<br>28th May                 | 'The Iron Age in the Upper Thames Region'<br>Mr D. Miles; 7.30 p.m. Clennell Room, Chute House.                     |
| Saturday<br>13th June                | Coach excursion to Salisbury Plain -<br>details inside.   |
| Saturday<br>13th June -<br>12th July | Excavations at Cowdery's Down,<br>Basing.   |
| Saturday<br>4th July -<br>2nd August | Excavations at Basing House,<br>Basing.   |
| Saturday<br>18th July                | Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society<br>AGM at new meeting place - St. Mary's Hall, Eastrop, 7.30 p.m. |

Reminder

"The Iron Age in the Upper Thames Region".

The last of this season's lectures will be given by Mr David Miles on 28th May, 7.30 p.m. Clennell Room, Chute House. Please come along.

Full day coach excursion to Salisbury Plain - Saturday 13th June

This year our coach outing is being organised and led by Tim Herrington who has taken '4000 years of history' as a theme.

It was originally intended to start with a visit to Stonehenge but current policy to preserve this most famous British archaeological site has resulted in visitors having to view from a distance. This is rather disappointing so Tim has chosen instead to take us to Avebury where the Neolithic stone circles and earthworks can be examined at much closer quarters. Avebury is in addition a delightful village with a church and manor house which can be visited, also a new museum of rural life, a National Trust shop and - pertinently as this will be our lunch stop - a good pub. En route to the next stop, there will be many well known archaeological sites to see - Silbury Hill, Wansdyke, West Kennet Long Barrow etc and a brief stop to see the Valley of the Sarsens.

We shall then visit Old Sarum - a complete contrast to Avebury in setting but which brings us on in time through The Iron Age, Saxon and Norman periods with the story being completed by the foundation of New Sarum - Salisbury - down in the valley below and the abandonment of Old Sarum. There will be time in Salisbury to look at the Cathedral or some of the other delights of that attractive mediaeval city and also to find some tea, ready to leave at about 5.30 p.m.

All these three places are interesting in their own right, but as a theme for the day, they are all in their different ways expressions of man's efforts to find a focus for his religious and ceremonial feelings, and all of which required great efforts of planning, construction and organisation.

The coach starting point will be Basingstoke Railway Station at 9.30 a.m. (leaving by the Kingsclere/Newbury road for those who live in that direction) and we should be back in Basingstoke by 7.00 p.m.

You will appreciate that in these days of high inflation, the hire of a coach is quite expensive - £135. So the price per adult will be £3.50 and £2 per child. If you wish to go on this outing please fill in the tear off slip and send it to Tim Herrington, 16 Scotney Road, Basingstoke by Friday 5th June or telephone Basingstoke 22090 between Monday 1st and Friday 5th June. Friday 5th is definitely the last day if we have not filled the coach by then it will have to be cancelled.

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Excursion to Salisbury Plain

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ seats for me on the coach outing on 13th June.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



### Summer Excavations

In spite of notices to the contrary in the local press, the excavation at Cowdery's Down will go ahead as planned, starting 13th June until 12th July, from 9.00 a.m. until 5.30 p.m. seven days a week. The director, Martin Millett would be glad of any help which members can give.

Another local 'dig' at which help is needed is Tim Schadla-Hall's Basing House project: the 1981 season will start on 4th July and run until 2nd August. For anyone interested in taking part on a full-time basis there is some subsistence money available - for details contact Tim at the Museum.

Both these excavations are extremely interesting and important sites, we are lucky to have them on our doorstep! It is one of the prime functions of a local archaeological society, to support local excavation work especially in times of recession when there is much less public money available for archaeology, and the role of the amateur becomes more important. Please give all the help you can!

### The Gauls: Celtic Antiquities from France.

Following Tony King's lecture to the Society in April on the Romans-Celtic temple excavation on Hayling Island, I went to the British Museum to view the current exhibition of Celtic antiquities from France.

The first point to be made is that admission is free. Exhibits are arranged in thematic groups with sufficient explanatory text displayed alongside for all but the serious student to dispense with buying the illustrated catalogue.

Based on a collection of Iron Age antiquities, mostly of the La Tène periods, loaned from several French museums, the exhibition includes a few objects, notably 'Snettisham' torques, from the British Museum's own collections, which provide comparative material between Britain and Gaul from about 500BC to 50 AD.

I always find Celtic art fascinating with its impressive swirling designs often incorporating animal motifs. Not surprisingly Celtic jewellery occupies its own display cases with well-represented groups of rings, brooches, torques, pendants and other items of human adornment in bronze, silver and gold finely wrought by craftsmen of great skill and imagination. Pottery is also well represented along with fine vessels of bronze, richly ornamented. Metal work is also strongly featured in displays of Celtic warfare, where swords, daggers, knives and spears are shown off alongside the horse furniture and cart fittings.

In the Champagne area, cart burials of the early La Tène 1 period (475-300BC) have been excavated and studied in depth. One spectacular exhibit of the reconstruction of such a burial with the cart wheels in place, set in a chalk cut grave, is well worth the effort to visit by itself.

The exhibition is open until 13 September and is small enough to hold the attention of the least interested, while being at the same time sufficiently representative.

Richard Searle.

### Easter Training Dig

Easter time is rarely favoured with good weather. This year, true to form, Easter came with a bitterly cold north-easterly wind which cut across Cowdery's Down's exposed hillside with Arctic vehemence. None the less a goodly band of enthusiastic and willing trainee diggers assembled there to be shown the rudiments of excavation technique.

As well as training, our archaeological objectives were to complete the sectioning of a large pit which had been started last year during the 1980 season of Martin Millett's excavation of the Middle-Saxon Village and to attempt to determine the shape of the pit, so that it could be plotted accurately into the official site plan. In the event, because of the complexity of the feature, neither of these two objectives was entirely fulfilled. But despite the weather everyone involved enjoyed the experience and learned from it.

In 1980 one side of the pit had been investigated and the material recovered - quantities of pottery, brick, tile, animal bones and oyster shells and a few metal pins - had strongly indicated a Civil War date for the feature. Our own examination at Easter unexpectedly revealed the bottom few layers of an Iron-Age pit beneath the Civil War period levels. To complicate matters further, on Easter Sunday, as if to trap the unwary, we located the butt end of a ditch which is also possible of an earlier date.

Topsoil removal in an area adjacent to the excavation neither determined the shape or extent of the pit nor indicated a continuation of the ditch. 17th Century material was scattered consistently throughout, which probably suggests that the earlier features were later dug into during the Civil War period and deliberately refilled with household and domestic rubbish. Certainly there was plenty to find in the way of pottery and metalwork, not to mention the large quantities of oyster shells and bone.

An important lesson was there to be learned by everyone, trainers and trainees alike. Never approach a site with too many preconceived ideas about it. You never know what might be underneath.

Richard Searle

### Proposed visit to Brittany

We have had suggestions that the Society should organise a week long holiday to Brittany. This would be for a small group travelling round in a minibus looking at some of the best known archaeological sites - Carnac, Gavrinis. Other societies e.g. N.E. Hants and SHARG have run successful trips to various places, but before any time is spent working out costing details, itineraries etc, it would be helpful to know how many members would be interested in principle in joining such a trip. If you are interested please contact the Secretary - without any commitment at this stage of course.

### Notes

- i) A further interim report on last year's season at Cowdery's Down is now available price 30p. They can be obtained from the Willis Museum and will be on sale at the next meeting on 28th May.
- ii) For those people who ordered stoneground wholemeal flour at Gavin Bowie's lecture on Eling Mill- please do not despair, it has not been forgotten! At the moment the miller is finding it hard to supply the demands of visitors to the mill, but as soon as there is a surplus in hand, our order will be fulfilled.
- iii) Wanted - a volunteer! If there is a member living near Kempshott who is not planning to go on the coach trip on 13th June and has a little time to spare, Barbara Applin would be pleased to hear from you! The society has been asked to provide a small exhibition for the Kempshott Village Fayre that day, which will be useful publicity for us. We would be glad to hear from any member who would like to man this display for a period during the afternoon to hand out leaflets and chat to people about the Society. Please ring Barbara Applin before 2nd June (tel: Basingstoke 65439)



### The Society's Visit to Selborne

On Saturday 16th May a party of Society members and their families met in the early afternoon at 'The Wakes', former home of the famous eighteenth century naturalist, Gilbert White. The house is now a museum devoted to him and to two explorers, Frank Oates and Captain Laurence Oates. The former (who was also a naturalist as well) explored in central Africa and South America, in the late 19th century and the latter perished alone in a blizzard during Scott's expedition to the South Pole in 1912.

We were received by the museum Curator and given a short talk about the life and work of Gilbert White. She also told us about his family - many of whose portraits hang on the walls of one of the main rooms. Sadly, however, no likeness exists of Gilbert White himself which is positively identifiable as his own. We also heard a little of how the house has been added to by its various owners since Gilbert White's day and what has been deduced about the uses of the rooms which existed in his own day.

The original manuscripts of the letters which form 'The Natural History of Selborne' are in the possession of The British Library, but we were fortunate in being shown photographic reproductions of several of them. The original title of White's work was: 'The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne.' The Antiquities are nowadays omitted from most published editions and concern the archaeological and historical aspects of the Augustinian Priory of Selborne which was established in 1232 and fell in 1486, fifty years before general dissolution of the Monasteries. There is a room in the museum given over to finds from the Priory.

The letters in 'The Natural History' were written between 1767 and 1780 and addressed to Thomas Pennant or Daines Barrington, both Fellows of the Royal Society, who encouraged White in his work. He is reckoned to have been far superior to either as a field naturalist and happily they recognized his merit. However, general recognition did not come in White's own lifetime, since the book was only published in 1789, four years before his death in 1793.

After looking round the house and garden (where White's famous 'ha-ha' may still be seen) the party split up into three groups which either toured the village, climbed the zig-zag path to the top of the hanger (or wooded hill) overlooking the village or visited a restorer of old Romany caravans. Afterwards several members met up at the Bush House Restaurant for tea. So ended a very interesting and worthwhile afternoon.

Graham Hall.

### Annual General Meeting: Saturday 18th July

I am sure that the initial response of most members on seeing the date of this year's AGM will be of surprise as we have never before held an AGM on a Saturday. However, there is a special reason for this: ten years ago on 19th July

The Archaeological Society held its inaugural meeting.

The committee felt it would be appropriate to celebrate our first decade by holding our AGM as close as possible to the anniversary.

We hope that after the business meeting members will stay behind and chat over coffee and a piece of birthday cake.

The Society has grown over the past few years and it has become necessary for us to find another meeting place. The Clennell Room at Chute House has a limit of 40 persons and we are at the limit at every meeting. We are holding our AGM at our new meeting place - St. Mary's Hall, Eastrop which is a larger hall with good facilities including easier parking. Details of how to reach St. Mary's Hall will be sent with the AGM papers.

This advance notice is to ask you please to reserve the date of this Celebration AGM in your diary.