

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

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CALENDAR

Tuesday, 14th June

Launch of Anne Hawker's book
at Church Cottage, 8 pm

Saturday, 25th June

Summer excursion to WESTBURY,
BRATTON CASTLE and WELLS,
9 am prompt

Thursday, 7th July

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 7.30 pm
at Chute House

SUBSCRIPTIONS 1983-4

A reminder that subscriptions for 1983-4 were due on 1st May. They remain as last year:

£7.00 family membership
 £5.00 single
 £2.00 pensioner or student

and should be sent to the Treasurer (Mrs Sarah Duckworth), 177 Pack Lane, Kempshott, Basingstoke or paid at the beginning of the AGM.

LAUNCH! VOICES OF BASINGSTOKE 1400-1600 by Anne Hawker

An invitation is enclosed to the launch of Anne Hawker's book, our first publication. This will be at Church Cottage at 8 pm. on Tuesday, 14th June 1983. We propose to start off this venture in fine style with wine. The Director of the Four Lanes Trust, whose generous grant covered our publication costs, will present copies to the Library, the Technical College, Queen Mary's College and Basingstoke Secondary Schools.

Anne Hawker will give a short talk about her book, and there will be a display showing stages from manuscript through proofs to the finished book, with the background work that was needed in producing the illustrations. But above all, Anne will be signing copies as they are bought.

Anyone who misses the launch can buy copies at the St Michael's Summer Market and the Kempshott Village Fete, both on Saturday, 18th June (Anne will be visiting the Summer Market to sign copies). And of course we shall have copies available at future meetings and they can be obtained from booksellers.

The Publications Sub-Committee would welcome suggestions for publicity - do you know of any outlet for selling? Is there any event coming up - craft fair, fete, conference etc - where books could be sold? Is there anywhere we could display posters or pass round our information sheet or covers? Any ideas or offers of help will be very welcome.

BARBARA APPLIN

EXCURSION WESTBURY, BRATTON CASTLE AND WELLS

The summer excursion has now been arranged for Saturday, 25th June. Details are attached, with a tear-off slip - please return this as soon as possible if you wish to book seats (and at the latest by 18th June). The cost will be £5 for adults, with the children's cost remaining at last year's rate of £2.50. We shall leave Basingstoke at 9 am (from Churchill Way, at the bottom of Lower Church Street). Please get there early as we cannot afford to wait for late-comers. We are particularly fortunate in having persuaded Mr Norman Cook to show us round Wells Cathedral. He is former Director of the Guildhall Museum in London and was instrumental in setting up the very impressive Museum of London.

On retirement to Wells, he became Honorary Curator of Wells Museum until this year.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This will take place at Chute House on Thursday, 7th July. The AGM papers will be circulated nearer the time, but you may like to know that after the AGM there will be a short report on the Society's practical activities, and Peter Heath's air photos will be on display. At that stage too, members are invited to bring slides of interesting archaeological or historical places they have visited recently.

THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY

Some members may not know that the Society has a small library they can use, in the care of Bob Mulla (phone Basingstoke 55450). In addition to various offprints, newsletters etc (including the offprint from the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society on Ken Smith's excavations at Winklebury), it contains the following:

Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club, 1971-9 and 1981-2
M3 Archaeology and MARC 3 reports
CBA Handbook of Scientific Aids for Archaeology
First Aid for Finds (Southampton University)
Rescue Archaeology in Hampshire
Treasures of China, Michael Ridley
Rescue Archaeology, ed Philip A Rahtz
Penguin Dictionary of Archaeology, W. Bray & D Trump

Bob will bring the 'book box' to the AGM.

THE MARY ROSE PLUMS

Those members of the Society who attended the Mary Rose lecture by Richard Harrison, heard of many of the spectacular finds recovered; in passing, a basket of plum stones was mentioned. 'The Garden', the Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society, has in its May 1983 issue an article by Peter Dodd, Lecturer in Pomology at Wye College, giving an assessment of those stones.

The following notes are taken from Mr Dodd's article. Alan Roach has a copy of the Journal and is willing to lend it to anyone wishing to read the whole article.

The Mary Rose sank in 1545 and little information is available on plum varieties that were grown at that time. Up to the accession of Henry VIII in 1509, much fruit was imported from the continent and a relatively limited range grown in England. The King had an orchard created on Crown land at Teynham in Kent from grafts of numerous fruits imported from France and the Low Countries. This orchard flourished and was much admired, with the result that by the end of the century similar orchards were planted in Kent and elsewhere [Was this the start of the Kent fruit industry?]

The earliest list of plum varieties grown in this country appears in Parkinson's 'Paradisi in sole paradisus terrestris', published in 1629. This list may include some of the then recent continental introductions.

Just over 100 stones, some with a black and shrivelled flesh, were found in a basket. They could have been prunes, an important part of the seaman's diet, or they could have been picked fresh just before the ship sailed (for the officers?) but July 19th is rather early in the plum season for many varieties to be ripe.

Peter Dodd followed two lines to identify the stones:

- a) the 'prune line' which involved searching historic literature on fruit to see which varieties were likely to have been dried for prunes at that time and checking those varieties against those in the Mary Rose.
- b) the 'fresh fruit' line which involved producing a short list of varieties described in the literature of the period, taking into account their harvest dates. This often had to be estimated from more modern data, taking into account the change to the Gregorian calendar in 1752 (July 19th in 1545 equates to July 30th now) and the changes in climate.

Thirty stones, representative of the ranges of size and shape, were selected for cleaning and detailed examination by measurement and photography, including electron photomicroscopy at 5000 x magnification. Each stone was compared with selected varieties in the collection at the National Fruit Trials, Brogdale EHS. There were 5 varieties in the sample of 30 stones. These were Catalonia, Greengage (known as Verdoch in 1629), Mirabelle (de Nancy), Myrobalan and Yellow Cherry Plum. All except that last are known by large numbers of synonyms.

Mr Dodd states he has used the term 'variety' very loosely. Mirabelles, Myrobalans and Greengages are not distinct hybrid varieties but are described as 'populations'. There are many forms of each in existence, with just very minor differences between them.

Mr Dodd thinks that the stones were from fresh fruit as the ship was only putting to sea for a short period.

BOB APPLIN

PS: Our impromptu 'sales team' at the Mary Rose lecture took £150.

CITIES IN THE SAND

The WEA have confirmed that they will be arranging a series of archaeological classes with this title, given by David Johnston, on Mondays in the autumn. Details will be available in the Library.

NOTE Work on the launch of Anne's book makes this rather a short Newsletter - and I apologise for the erratic spacing; I'm 'running in' a new typewriter.