

# BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



N E W S L E T T E R

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## CALENDAR

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| * <u>Sat 31 March</u>  | TRAINING DIG 10 - 4 (see p3)  |
| * <u>Sun 1 April</u>   | TRAINING DIG 9.30 - 4   |
| * <u>Thurs 5 April</u> | <u>ROUND BARROWS &amp; RING DITCHES</u> Lecture by David Allen, 7.30 pm, Clennell Room, Chute House               |
| Sat 7 April            | <u>Nineteenth-Century Towns in Hampshire</u> , HFC Local History Symposium at Southampton (see p4)                |
| * <u>Sat 7 April</u>   | TRAINING DIG 9.30 - 4   |
| * <u>Sun 8 April</u>   | TRAINING DIG 9.30 - 4   |
| Thurs 19 April         | <u>The Willis Collection of Clocks</u> Lecture by Nicholas Hall (Friends of Willis Museum), 7.30, Willis Museum   |
| Wed 25 April           | National Trust Public Meeting, Haymarket Theatre (p5)   |
| * <u>Thurs 3 May</u>   | <u>THE EARLY MODERN TOWN IN BERKSHIRE 1540-1640</u> Lecture by Joan Dils, 7.30, Clennell Room, Chute House        |
| Fri 4 May              | First lecture of Winchester Cathedral Saxon Festival (p4)   |
| * <u>Sat 19 May</u>    | OUTING to MUSEUM OF LONDON 9.30 - 6.30 (p4)   |
| Thurs 21 June          | <u>Basing House &amp; Odiham Castle - Recent Excavations</u> Lecture by David Allen (Friends) Willis Museum, 7.30 |
| * <u>Thurs 5 July</u>  | ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 7.30, Clennell Room, Chute Ho.   |
| Sat 15 July            | Hampshire Field Club trip to Cranbourne Chase   |
| * <u>Sat 8 Dec</u>     | WINTER SOCIAL Church Cottage  |

THE CHAIRMAN WRITES ...

After two years of holding the membership fees stable, it is with deep regret that the committee has to increase the subscriptions due on May 1st 1984. The new charges will be:

£6 per individual member  
 £8 for family membership  
 £3 for OAPs and students

(Members are reminded that they are responsible for their guests at lectures paying the visitor's fee of 50p.)

This increase is due to the cost of printing our excellent and, we believe, highly appreciated newsletter, which is now approximately £3 per member each year, plus the hire of lecture rooms and lecturers' expenses.

Unfortunately, while attendance figures at lectures are very good, the support for fund-raising events is not, so we only have our subscriptions to rely on to pay our way. Our winter social was a great success as a special occasion, but a disaster as a fund-raising event; of the £20 raised, £10 came from the raffle, the prizes having been donated by committee members and friends.

For our winter social in 1984 we have been able to book a SATURDAY, December 8th at Church Cottage, so BOOK THE DATE NOW in your diaries, and please, please support your society on this occasion. The Barn Dance planned for March 1984 was cancelled, because the work, effort and strain occasioned by organising this social event was not financially worthwhile, although again all those who attended the 1983 function had an enjoyable evening.

We have had a very poor response to our questionnaire on outings, and so far a poor response to our proposed outing to the Museum of London (and, we hope, a dig) on Saturday 19th May (not 12th as originally planned). It is proposed to leave Basingstoke at 9.30 am and return to reach Basingstoke about 6.30 pm, at a cost of about £4 for adults, £2 for children. Our outings too are planned both as social get-togethers and fund-raising events.

To the same stalwart members who are present with their support both physical and financial at all the society's functions, the committee express their appreciation. But we would like to see many more of you participating in and enjoying these social events, as well as enjoying our excellent lectures. All are planned, we hope, for your entertainment and pleasure.

BETTY WATERS (Chairman)

## TRAINING DIG

This will be held on the Saturdays and Sundays, 31st March, 1st April and 7th/8th April, starting on the first day at 10 am and on subsequent days at 9.30, finishing at 4 pm. We are returning to the Viables site where the Society has previously partly excavated an Iron Age settlement\*. On this occasion it is planned to cut a section across the junction of two ditches.

Please let Peter Heath know beforehand (Basingstoke 27713) if you wish to come, and he will give you directions to the site. Bring a small pointing trowel (4" blade recommended, with a forged or welded tang - rivetted tangs break after very little use!) Bring a packed lunch, and it is advisable to bring a kneeling mat; buckets and small shovels are available but you may prefer to bring your own.

\*As mentioned in the last Newsletter, the report on the Iron Age Burial at Viables has been published in Archaeological Journal Vol 139 (1982)

## ROUND BARROWS AND RING DITCHES: BURIAL CUSTOMS IN THE SECOND MILLENIUM BC

Lecture by David Allen at 7.30 pm on Thursday, 5th April in the Clennell Room, Chute House

David Allen is well-known to many members as the Curator of Archaeology for the Hampshire County Museum Service, based at Andover. We have asked him to give us an "updating" lecture on an aspect of archaeology that is very relevant to our part of Wessex. Although the "Popham Beacons" are the most easily seen round barrows in our area, there were once many more - at Buckskin and Kempshott, for a start - and ring ditches were recently investigated at Cowdery's Down.

## THE EARLY MODERN TOWN IN BERKSHIRE, 1540-1640

Lecture by Joan Dils at 7.30 pm on Thursday, 3rd May in the Clennell Room, Chute House

The dates given in the title will make it clear this lecture does not cover a very recent part of history, as one might imagine, but that today the historian uses this term for the 16th and 17th centuries. Joan Dils was the tutor of a University of Reading / WEA class which produced the book REDDING 1540-1640 (yes, they did intentionally use that old spelling for Reading). With our own recent publication of Anne Hawker's VOICES OF BASINGSTOKE covering part of the same period, it will be interesting to find out what Basingstoke had in common with Berkshire towns at that time, and what was different.

POT WASHING

After the Training Dig, Peter Heath will welcome helpers for pot washing in his garage (1 Hammond Close, Basingstoke) from 7.30 pm every Thursday except for lecture Thursdays - but he would be glad if people could ring him beforehand to say they intend to come (Basingstoke 27713).

MAY OUTING TO THE MUSEUM OF LONDON

As our Chairman has mentioned, this will now be on 19th May (not 12th), leaving Basingstoke at 9.30 am and returning at about 6.30 pm. Provisional cost (depending on numbers going) about £4 for adults, £2 for children. Please let Sue Headley know as soon as possible (and definitely at or before the April meeting) if you wish to go - 31 Winchester Street, Overton; tel. Basingstoke 770752.

The Museum of London has many very exciting displays - including the famous "Fire of London" scene - and can keep visitors enthralled with a constant sense of discovery over many hours.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY TOWNS IN HAMPSHIRE

Symposium of the Local History Section of the Hampshire Field Club, Adult Education Dept, Southampton University, 10 am, Saturday 7th April

A reminder that our member, Derek Spruce, is one of the speakers at this Symposium, talking about Nineteenth-Century Basingstoke. Details from Mr C M Hayden, King Alfred's College, Sparkford Rd, Winchester SO22 4NR. Cost £4 per person.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Advance warning - the date will be Thursday, 5th July. Please book the date in your diaries now. We hope to have something of interest to follow the business meeting.

WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL SAXON FESTIVAL

1984 is the 1000 anniversary of Bishop Ethelwold's death. Bishop Ethelwold was Bishop of Winchester during the reign of King Edgar; he is best remembered for his establishment of ordered Benedictine monastic life in England, the introduction of Gregorian chant, and for his influence on the Winchester school of manuscript illumination and encouragement of the Carolingian minuscule writing. He also completed the old Minster,

which was excavated by Martin Biddle and his team. In order to commemorate this very influential Wintonian, a programme of events has been arranged, including lectures, concerts, drama, exhibitions and a calligraphy competition. I will bring the full programme along to the next few lectures for members to study in detail - or a programme can be obtained from "Saxon Festival", 2 The Close, Winchester SO23 9LS. The following is a selection of items, to give some idea of what the festival includes:

- May 4th "The City and the Kingdom", lecture by Prof. Martin Biddle, 8 pm, New Hall  
 May 23, 24, 25th "Alfred the Great" Drama in the Cathedral, 7.30  
 June 1st "The Sculpture of Wessex", lecture by Prof. Rosemary Cramp, The Guildhall, 8 pm  
 July 12-14th Calligraphy competition exhibition, Priors' Hall, 10 am - 5 pm  
 July 26th "Bishop Ethelwold to Bishop John Taylor", Southern Cathedrals Festival Concert, 2.30 pm, Cathedral  
 August 2nd "Anglo-Saxon Religion" Poetry reading, Cathedral (Lady Chapel) 6.30  
 Sept 8th Monastic Day - offices of Benedictine Monastery recreated by Schola Gregoriana - all day, Cathedral

Tickets for the lectures, each fortnight, and all on Saxon subjects by well-known Saxon scholars, are £1.50; for "Alfred the Great" £2.50 or £1.50; and for the concerts £3.50, £2.50 or £1.50; for the poetry readings £1. As well as these particular events, there will be exhibitions at the Cathedral throughout the Festival: outside the building, Ethelwold's extension to the Old Minster, with explanatory details; in the North transept a display of photographs and drawings to illustrate life in Saxon England; in the Cathedral Treasury an exhibition of carved ivories, metalwork, stonework and precious religious items gathered from several sources; in the Cathedral Library a display of illuminated manuscripts produced by the monks of St Swithuns' - in particular the Benedictional of St Ethelwold, on show in Winchester for the first time in centuries.

This alone will make a visit to Winchester during the summer months May - September extremely worthwhile!

MARY OLIVER

#### NATIONAL TRUST Public Meeting

The National Trust are holding a public meeting at the Haymarket Theatre on Wednesday, 25th April at which a panel of speakers will be giving illustrated talks about Hampshire properties, with particular attention to the Vyne.

The meeting is to encourage the formation of a North Hampshire Centre. Tickets are free, but must be booked in advance from Mrs Anita Bain, The National Trust, Polesden Lacey, Dorking, Surrey RH5 6BD (enclosing s.a.e.)

ODIHAM SON ET LUMIERE 7th-11th February

The scriptwriter for "Odiham through the Ages" admitted that she faced an impossible task in trying to combine all the aspects of the village's history into one evening's entertainment. However, she and an army of assistants succeeded in producing an interesting show covering from Roman occupation in the fourth century AD through to the contribution made by the local RAF station to the recent Falklands campaign.

I was impressed by the use of children's paintings to illustrate the seige of King John's castle in 1216 and later to show the various activities at the village fairs. Inevitably we had children singing "Ring-a-ring-o'roses" as a background to the story of the plague of 1665 and Odiham's pest house built to isolate the victims, which still stands in the churchyard.

For me the tapestry seemed to run out of picture material at the end of the 18th century and we were told little at all of Victorian times. As a consequence, the story tellers had to make too much of the Rolls of Honour of the two wars in this century. It would have been nice to have sewn it up with anecdotes about interesting local characters of the recent past. Most villages seem to produce such people.

My over-all impression was that the people of Odiham had made a tremendous response in raising nearly £1500 to help restore their church tower. I share their Vicar's view when, in thanking everyone, he said that as a schoolboy he had found history a boring subject because he was taught by reciting dates parrot-fashion. How much more interesting to learn about the past through the modern techniques of son et lumiere.

ALAN ROACH

NEW ROMANO-BRITISH GALLERY, BRITISH MUSEUM

Taking up the editor's challenge in the last Newsletter, and with a little help from Persil's British Rail offer, the Oliver family had a day in London recently and sampled the delights of the newly displayed Romano-British material at the British Museum.

Considering the size of the collections, the gallery is not enormous, but the displays are attractively done and cover a wide range of subjects. What the gallery does not attempt to offer is a chronological survey of the 400 years of the Roman occupation or a comprehensive display of brooches, pottery or military artefacts - there are many provincial displays which are more useful from this didactic point of view. The great value of this exhibition is that it offers a selection of the richest, rarest and most beautiful objects from the whole province, well and clearly laid out, and much of it for the first time.

The story of the Water Newton treasure was much in the news at the time of its discovery; now the lovely silver vessels of the

earliest Christian group known from the whole empire can be seen, and nearby the hoard of gold rings, elaborate and unusual buckles and inscribed silver spoons from Thetford, all dedicated to the little known god Faunus. Not all the good things were chance finds. From Dr Ann Ellison's excavations at Uley, Gloucestershire, a lovely limestone head of Mercury is displayed with information about the temple and its surrounding buildings and the worship of Mercury. From the Vindolanda excavations by Hadrian's Wall - perhaps visually the least exciting case in the gallery but one of the most interesting - there are wooden writing tablets. These fragile scraps of wood, so skilfully preserved with their unfamiliar script, which survived against all the odds, are the oldest historical documents in Britain. Another exhibit deals with the British Museum's current excavation at Stonea Grange in Cambridgeshire in the Fens, an area of special development in Roman times. It is hoped that as excavations and research proceed, these cases will be kept up to date.

The army, of course, played an important part throughout the Roman occupation and a balcony above the main gallery is devoted to military themes. One specially successful display shows two legionaries (of different dates), almost lifesize paintings, with the finds - weapons, fragments of equipment - displayed in their correct positions. Other cases deal with the cavalry, the navy etc, with a long wall panel on Hadrian's Wall. This section relies heavily on plans, diagrams and photographs.

The religious life of the province is very well represented, reflecting the particular richness of the collection in this direction. As well as the items already mentioned, there is the wall plaster from Lullingstone villa, restored after years of patient work by museum staff, to show a frieze of early Christians, their arms outstretched in prayer, and columns and chi-rho symbols. There are also bronze statuettes and silver votive plaques, illustrating the great variety of gods recognised in Roman Britain, many of them an apparent merger of Roman and Celtic deities.

Other aspects of life in the province are also illustrated, with ironwork, glass, pottery, jewellery, leatherwork, all with labels which strike the right balance of giving enough information without being over-long and tiring to read. As well as cased exhibits, there are larger ones - such as the tomb of Julius Classicanus, the lead Christian font from Icklingham, and wall displays like the mosaic from Thruxton and the stone sculptured head of a Celtic lady from Towcester.

On the whole, our impressions were favourable and we enjoyed our visit to the gallery, a traditional display of high quality. After initial surprise at the lack of thematic direction, we appreciated the freedom to progress as we wished, and it was nice to see old favourites like the Mildenhall treasure and head of Hadrian among the more recently acquired material. It is a display which can be enjoyed on many levels, perhaps most simply in terms of the sheer beauty of the majority of the exhibits.

The British Museum have produced a new book called Roman Britain by T. W. Potter, a rather brief but well-written account of the

main aspects of Romano-British archaeology, very well illustrated with photographs relating to the material on display in the gallery. Not a catalogue of the exhibition, but a useful reminder of it.

MARY OLIVER

#### LOCAL HISTORY COMES TO LIFE

The joint Queen Mary College / Proteus Theatre production at the Central Studio of Hallelujah Basingstoke! was a brash, noisy and thoroughly enjoyable event.

This musical play was written around the Salvation Army riots in Basingstoke during 1881. General Booth had decided that Basingstoke, one of whose principal industries at that time was brewing, needed saving. He duly despatched a platoon of his Cockney lasses under the redoubtable Martha. The play told in words and song of the fight the Salvation Army had to establish itself in the town against the opposition organised by the brewers, May and Adams in particular. The Massagenians, the opposition, in the play organised by May but actually probably organised by Adams, were a suitably rough crowd and the riot scenes on the small stage area were impressive. The cavalry charge was very cleverly and funnily symbolised by having the dragoon Lieutenant charge across the stage on a child's hobby horse, with sabre drawn.

The actual events seemed to peter out, as did the play, and this, perhaps, was its major weakness. After the assault on the Silk Mill in Brook St which the Salvation Army had hired as a barracks did the Brewers realise they had stimulated more than they bargained for and call off their hirelings?

The play was written by Nigel Bellairs, with additional material by Gareth Thomas, using local archives (Hants & Berks Gazette) and Salvation Army records. One quibble, no-one goes "up to Brook Street", even in 1984.

BOB APPLIN

#### MEETING PLACE

Advance notice - from September we shall be able to return to the Jackson Room (downstairs) at Chute House, but we have had to change the date to the second Thursday of the month. Please make a note in your diaries.