

# BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

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## CALENDAR

- Thus 21 June Basing House & Odiham Castle, Recent Excavations by Dave Allen, 7.30 pm, Willis Museum (NB in new premises at the old Town Hall)
- \* Thurs 5 July ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by "The House of Thomas Lane, the Mercer" by Anne Hawker, 7.30 pm, Chute House
- Sat 7 July Hampshire Field Club one-day conference on Marsh Court, House & Gardens (Lutyens & Jekyll) at Marsh Court, Stockbridge (details 92 62850)
- Sat 15 July Hampshire Field Club trip to Cranbourne Chase
- \* Thurs 19 July VISIT TO SILCHESTER Meet at Silchester Church, 7 pm
- Sat 21 July OGS Crawford Memorial Lecture by John Collis, King Alfred's College, Winchester, 5 pm (HFC)
- \* Thurs 13 Sept VICTORIAN FASHIONABLE DRESS by Caroline Goldthorpe, 7.30 pm, Chute House (Jackson Room)
- Thurs 20 Sept Timber Framed Buildings in North Hampshire by Richard Warmington, 7.30 pm, Willis Museum
- Sat 29 Sept Annual Conference of Hampshire Field Club, Cadland House, Fawley
- \* Thurs 11 Oct ROMAN GLASS by Dr Denise Allen, 7.30 pm, Chute House

\*Society activity

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

For anyone who missed the notice in the last Newsletter, a reminder that subscriptions for 1984-5 were due on 1st May:

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

Our Treasurer will be glad to receive subscriptions at the AGM or by post: Mrs Sarah Duckworth, 177 Pack Lane, Kempshott, Basingstoke

AGM AND AFTER

Following the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (at 7.30 pm on Thursday 5th July at Chute House) Anne Hawker will show us the model house of Thomas Lane the mercer, which she made in order to work out how the many items listed in the inventory attached to his will could possibly fit into the rooms mentioned. Details, of course, in her book VOICES OF BASINGSTOKE 1400-1600, available at our meetings and from Hammicks, the Library and the Museum. Anne and her house are much in demand by local societies (and TV), so this is an occasion not to be missed.

VISIT TO SILCHESTER

Mike Fulford has kindly agreed to show us round this season's excavations on the evening of Thursday, 19th July. Meet in the car park by Silchester church at 7.0 pm. It is not a large car park, so please offer and ask for lifts as needed. Perhaps we can arrange this at the AGM.

1984-5 PROGRAMME

A varied programme of lectures is being planned, beginning with:

Thursday 13th September VICTORIAN FASHIONABLE DRESS by  
 Caroline Goldthorpe  
 Thursday 11th October ROMAN GLASS by Dr Denise Allen

We are particularly glad to begin our new season of lectures with a talk by the new Curator at the Willis Museum, whose speciality is Costume.

NB Lectures will be on the second Thursday of the month, at 7.30 pm, so that we can book the Jackson Room (downstairs) at Chute House.

## HAVE YOU ANY PHOTOGRAPHS?

Anne Hawker is now working on a new book, on the history of Basingstoke. She asks anyone who is willing to lend her pictures or photographs which could be used as illustrations to ring her at Basingstoke 22748. Anne promises to take great care of them and return them personally.

## TRAINING DIG

The Society has carried out, over two recent week-ends, a training excavation at Viables. Members will no doubt recall the excavation which took place there in 1976; some of the finds are exhibited in the Willis Museum.

The objects of the recent excavations were to establish the line of the extended ditches, to obtain further dating evidence and finally to train members in the techniques required to complete an excavation. The work, of course, does not stop with the removal of "finds" from the soil. We still have to process the objects recovered, draw the plans and sections and prepare a detailed report. The report will be published in our Newsletter later this year. It is hoped that we shall shortly be able to meet regularly to do the processing of our finds.

The excavation was directed by Peter Heath, ably assisted by Peggy Drury, Eric Robinson and Katie Smith. Some twenty persons took advantage of our training schedule, including a party from Yately who attend an archaeological class at a local evening institute. We think that they did learn something of practical archaeology and we were very pleased to receive their help.

The main objects of the "dig" were achieved with members having the opportunity to get practical experience in surveying, trowelling, planning and section drawing. Some pot sherds were washed on site and a resistivity survey was carried out on part of the adjoining field in an attempt to locate any extension to the Viables site.

Within the top soil of the trench a George III penny was found, dated 1807. This copper coin (not bronze) was struck at the Soho mint of Boulton & Watt in Birmingham. There had been so many forgeries of copper currency that the issue of copper coins was suspended in 1754. Not until 1797 was the "cartwheel" coin issued, both 2d and 1d, but these were so clumsy to use that they were rapidly withdrawn. New 1d,  $\frac{1}{2}$ d and  $\frac{1}{4}$ d coins were designed by Conrad H Kuchler at the Soho mint and for the first time (in 1806) the coins were "milled", ie stamped out by machinery instead of hammered by hand. Until recently it was thought that Kuchler designed both faces of the new coins, but it seems that a painter, Sir Nathaniel Dance-Holland (1735-1811) designed Britannia, who appeared on our coinage on the first occasion since Roman times.\* His design, with Britannia's shield added, has been used on copper and bronze coins continually from that time.

PETER HEATH

\*From a short paper read to the British Numismatic Society in April 1974.

Further reading: English Coins G C Brooke  
British Coin Designs and Designers H W A Linecar  
A Handbook of Coins of the British Isles Howard  
 W Bradley  
Coin Year Book (published by "Coin Monthly")

#### SYMPOSIUM ON 19TH CENTURY TOWNS IN HAMPSHIRE

Five members of the Society (and one lapsed member!) visited Southampton on Saturday, 7th April, to attend this symposium, arranged by the Hampshire Field Club Local History Section, in association with the University of Southampton Adult Education Department.

To present a general introductory lecture about urban development in the 19th century and to convey the essential details of the growth of four Hampshire towns - Basingstoke, Bournemouth, Romsey and Southampton - was an ambitious programme. The five speakers did well to provide an interesting occasion, given the constraints put on them by the time available. The two smaller towns could have received a greater allocation of time.

Dr J. Davis, from Oxford, gave the introductory talk. He dealt with the main aspects of urban growth, showing in particular the gradual extension, especially from 1835 onwards, of the powers and the responsibilities of urban authorities. He set the "growing range of (their) executive duties" against the "casual treatment of (their) rating powers". The impact of industrial development and "the dominance of the local aristocrat" were also mentioned as factors of some importance. In his concluding remarks he suggested that the ideal urban unit would appear to be one which is "small enough to manage, large enough to take a pride in", a reference which is perhaps not without significance in the context of today.

The first case study was of Southampton. Dr M. W. Doughty, from Winchester, spoke of the changes which occurred in the post-1835 town, classifying these as administrative, social, technological and structural. One important cause of change was the need to co-ordinate the work of a number of local bodies - Paving Commissioners, Turnpike Trusts, Harbour Commissioners, Pier Commissioners - each of which may or may not have been "bent on self-aggrandisement" in pursuit of its specialist function. Another cause was the need to provide satisfactory drainage and water supply to the town, in order to combat disease (cholera visited the town in 1849 and again in 1865; smallpox was not unknown); this was well illustrated from a study of part of the old town. A belated recognition that there were serious deficiencies in the housing provided for the growing working population (the term "beaver dens" was used to describe the slums of the Simnel St and Bugle St area of the town) led to the problem of slum clearance becoming a political issue in the local election campaigns, eg in 1890.

The latter part of the talk showed well the way in which local pressure could be brought to bear, to generate a call to action. There was correspondence in the "Southampton Times". The important role of the determined and expert individual in influencing

policy was revealed by the work of a Medical Officer of Health called Harris, described as "an enthusiastic supporter of housing reform". The call to action resulted in a survey of the problem being made, and in January 1891 a report was presented to the Corporation, which appears however to have taken its time to decide how to respond to the call. It was not until 1894 that action was begun; the re-housing programme was not completed until 1906.

Mrs P Berrow gave us her account of the development of Romsey, showing, with the aid of a copy of the map prepared for the Tithe Award of 1845, the main features of the site of the town. It grew up around a Benedictine nunnery established on a gravel terrace in the valley of the River Test. Her main theme was the way in which the position of the town relative to towns such as Southampton, Salisbury, Winchester and Ringwood gained for it some importance as a route centre, providing for the needs of the traveller by road. The cutting of the Andover-Redbridge Canal seems not to have had a great impact on the economy of the town, while nothing came of the proposed canal link to Salisbury, apart from its alignment becoming a "line of railway" instead.

The speaker made the point that, although the town continued to serve its immediate area as a market centre, its rate of growth was slow. There was some movement into the town from villages round about, but there was also migration out of the town - eg to Southampton, where employment prospects were better. In the 1850s industry was represented by sack- and paper-making, tanning, saw-milling and brewing. The opening of the railway linking Bishopstoke with Salisbury in 1847 and the line joining Andover to Redbridge in 1865 made Romsey a junction, but little if anything in the way of growth can be attributed directly to this. It was not until the 1870s that a regeneration of the town began, with increased building construction and the establishment of new industrial enterprises - an iron works, a board mill, a boatyard and a jam factory. There was also a re-organisation of the brewing industry, involving the three existing firms, with the name of Strong and Co. assuming the dominant position in the town. The talk confirmed at least one member of the audience in his intention to visit Romsey to find out more about it (and this he has since done).

Basingstoke was the subject of the fourth talk of this rather concentrated day. Derek Spruce made the most of the time allocated to him, to present what was the most statistical of the five talks. The three main themes of this talk were agriculture, industry and transport. He spoke of the agricultural roots of Basingstoke and showed how the town served as a market centre for the farming of the surrounding area, mentioning the fact that there were several large farms within the boundary of the borough. At the beginning of the century, the area of "urban farm" was very small, estimated at about 200 acres, a very small proportion of the borough's area. It was grouped around the nucleus provided by the old mediaeval settlement. The town gradually came to have a significance far greater than that of a small market town at the centre of a purely local transport network. In the coaching era, because of its position on one of the roads leading westwards from London, it assumed an important place in the national transport system. An interesting comparison was made, by means of a diagram, of the

frequency of coach services passing through the town to various destinations in 1784, 1823 and 1839, the year in which Basingstoke was linked to London by railway. The canal link with London had some influence on the development of the town, but the coming of the railway made a greater impact, particularly after the town became a junction for lines to Salisbury and the West and to Reading and the Midlands. One result was an enlargement of the hinterland of the town; another was that the railway service itself became an important new source of employment. The speaker drew attention to the relative decrease in the contribution of local farming to the economy of the town by instancing the decline in the fortunes of the annual fairs. In contrast to this he mentioned the slow but steady increase in manufacturing industry by firms such as Wallis & Stevens, Burberry and Thornycroft.

Dr Soane, the last speaker, took as his subject "The Development of Bournemouth as a Watering-place". Describing his town as a "unique urban phenomenon", he showed how it had developed from virtually nothing (a few fishermen's huts) to form part of a conurbation which today includes not only Poole and Christchurch but also reaches out to Ringwood, Ferndown and Wimborne, the area as a whole having a population size similar to that of Liverpool. His account was of the way in which an area of barren heathland (with its attendant disadvantages) was turned to great advantage through the enterprise of certain local landowners - men such as Tregonwell, Trapps-Gervis and the Earl of Malmesbury. It was they who became, either directly or indirectly, "developers" in the modern sense of the word. They set out to build select villa residences for the well-to-do part of the population, who were increasingly able and willing to use their wealth (some of it relatively recently created) in this way. The speaker appeared to take for granted the natural advantages of the area - the local climate, the sea and the sand. Without these, the poor fishing hamlet would have taken longer to become a genteel town and watering place! It would have been interesting too if he could have shown us something of the way in which the coming of the railway influenced the development of the growing town.

Your contributor was not alone in thinking how appropriate it was for the speaker, about half-way through his talk, to ask the question "What has all this to do with Bournemouth?" Some members of the audience were beginning to wonder! Some of the points could have been made more simply and therefore more clearly. Phrases such as "polarity of urban segregation", "economically impelled migration", "homogeneity of the natural environment", "south coast select social structure" may just have a place in a learned sociological treatise, but they do not fit well into a talk on local history. Difficult to accept at any time, they are even more difficult to take in when, towards the end of an intensive day, the attention is no longer as sharp as it was and thoughts are perhaps turning towards tea.

ERIC STOKES

#### BISKUPIN - POLAND'S IRON AGE LAKE VILLAGE

Barbara Lovell has sent in these details of the Biskupin exhibition from 3rd May to 29th July (11 am to 5 pm) at the

Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, near Chichester; entrance fee £1.50 adults, 80p children:

Among Prehistoric archaeological sites in Europe, Biskupin in Poland ranks near the top of the list for interest and importance. The complete settlement, once housing 1000 inhabitants and built of wood in c 550 BC, had settled down into marshy ground, leaving the entire intricate foundation system and lower parts of the walls intact. No settlement, large or small, in Europe or outside the Mediterranean area is in a comparable state of preservation.

(Further information: 0243 63 348)

### THE JORVIK VIKING CENTRE, YORK

Just two years ago, in June 1982, Joan Merryweather wrote an enthusiastic article in our Newsletter on the "Vikings in England" exhibition at York. It made many members wish that we could dash up to York before the exhibition closed that September, to seize what she called "the opportunity of a lifetime". But now Richard Dexter brings us up to date. Can the lure of York be resisted any longer?

This Easter holiday my daughter twisted my arm, not very hard admittedly, to take her to York to catch up on some history. The main reason for the visit and the highlight was a visit to the Viking Centre at Coppergate.

When I visited the site about four years ago, it was a very familiar scene of urban archaeology, scaffolding, mud, trenches, tags and rain. Now, however, it has all been developed, but with a difference; it is the most surprising and marvellous end to a successful archaeological dig. To cut a story short, "they" were able to take a long lease of the basement of the new building to reconstruct the site as it was and to lay it out in three dimensions but with a difference.

After buying your ticket for £2, you descend a modern stairway into a darkened passage which has on its walls a comprehensive display of audio-visual aids recounting the Vikings' history. This is partly to remind you of the setting and, I think, partly to whet your appetite and occupy the mind whilst waiting.

Once having arrived at the starting point, you are ushered into a four-seater open car, for all the world like a fairground ghost train but with loudspeakers in the back headrest from which is relayed a commentary by Magnus Magnusson. The setting is a dark rundown Victorian cellar with a broken bicycle and bathtub on the wall. The car proceeds backwards, taking you symbolically back in time past some life-size but ghostly coloured effigies of human beings in the apparel of earlier centuries, top hats, parasols, periwigs, breeches, hose, wimples, plague-infested rags and Norman tunics until you reach a scene of fire and desolation (1066-1087) at which point the car rotates 180 degrees and presents you with a vista of a fully lit, life-size reconstruction of a Viking village street.



The car is guided by magnetic strips and travels at a baby's crawling speed. You travel down the main street, passing life-size children playing and calling to each other in Old Norse (hidden loudspeakers), a jewellery maker, a goose girl all jabbering away at each other. You are then driven into a house where can be seen domestic life round a fire, all within touching distance, and out again into the back yard where a lusty man is sitting on a loo, at which point your faculty of smell is assailed by a simulated Viking odour; your attention is drawn to the proximity of the well within arm's reach.

You have now travelled about 30 yards and are half way round.

There follows a scene from a Viking quay with a longship unloading merchandise with an old seafarer recounting in Old Norse his tales from yesteryear to the younger generation.

At this point you are reminded that what you have seen, apart from a little foreshortening of the quay, is what was found on the ground at Coppergate and this is illustrated in the next section by a reconstruction of the site whilst being dug, the jewellery, burned wickers and posts of the houses, kitchen midden, hearth, well and loo, in fact all the prime material in its raw state.

The car then passes through a finds laboratory at the back end of which you alight and explore the static display. A particularly imaginative exhibit is a reconstruction of a stratified vertical section with pottery ranging from broken willow pattern at the top to Late Roman at the bottom, all set into cement on a wall, and which you are invited to touch.

The journey and display takes about an hour and is a milestone in the development of displaying historical material. It leaves you with a feeling of having been completely immersed in the life of a Viking village, a feeling which up to now I have only experienced with periods of a much later date, as at the Castle Museum across the way with its Georgian, Brontë and Victorian rooms.

It was worth every bit of the effort to get there. The queue can be up to 3 or 4 hours long, although pre-booked coach parties have priority. The best time to drop in seems to be either at 9 am or when it closes at 7 pm. Sunday morning, I am told, is the best time of all before the tourists have got out of bed.

RICHARD DEXTER

#### SILCHESTER WORKSHOP, THE "HALF-MARATHON"

The Silchester Workshop at the University of Reading was originally billed as a two-day event on 24th and 25th March. It was to have two highlights: the presence of experts who are studying different classes of finds from the excavations, and an opportunity to see and handle some of the objects themselves.

It seems ironic that it was the Reading half-marathon that caused the second day to be cancelled, the organisers fearing



that it would be impossible to get in or out of the town. So the second half of the promise was virtually abandoned. There was a small display, but certainly not the range I had hoped for. And it was unfortunate that George Boon was not able to give his talk on Coins. However, the fulfilling of the first half of the promise was pretty well a marathon!

The Workshop did not complement the last Silchester day, then, (Newsletter 81) as well as was expected, though some aspects were considered more fully. Mike Fulford's account of The Current Excavations admirably placed what we have seen on site in context, with a stronger emphasis now on the possible use of military architects sent by Agricola to advise the civil administration on the construction of its first (timber) forum-basilica.

Averil Martin-Hoogewerf's discussion of The Wallplasters was based on knowledge of their make-up and the conventions of wall decoration, which makes it possible to suggest areas of particular importance in the basilica (for instance the quality blue colouring in the "entrance hall" area which may have led to a shrine) but she accepted that much wall plaster was probably found out of its original position, coming from a later levelling-up process. Annie Grant's analysis of The Animal Bones introduced some interesting points, with comparisons from different phases at Exeter, Portchester and Fishbourne. But I suspect that the nature of the two areas they came from at Silchester - the forum/basilica and the amphitheatre - gave an odd bias to any deductions that can be drawn from them and do not necessarily give a true picture of the agricultural background of the town as a whole.

Mark Corney's account of Personal Ornament and other "Special" Finds was on firmer ground, with many references to parallels from other sites and dating evidence. Some of the splendid objects in his slides helped to make up for the selectivity of those on display. He was ready to see things in a new light, too. Comparing a bronze handle from Silchester with one from Richborough, there identified as a handle for carrying a Roman legionary's helmet, he is convinced that they are in fact handles from trays! David Richards gave a useful account of The Ironwork, particularly important in view of the 4th century use of the forum/basilica for metal working.

Michael Keith-Jones, on Pollen, avoided the trap into which Annie Grant had fallen, as he was careful to contrast the two areas from which pollen had been studied and to point out the consequent difference in their interpretation. A pond outside the sluiceway had been filled with rubble thrown over the wall from the Roman town and its pollen showed the plants, weeds etc growing in the town and the immediate vicinity. Pollen from the bare sand and seating banks of the amphitheatre, by contrast, was wind-blown and represented the overall landscape around Silchester. Martin Jones' analysis of Seeds went back to work of 1899-1910, showing the advances of modern techniques. He had many interesting facts and deductions, such as the evidence for long distance trade in "fancy foodstuffs" like grapes, figs, dates, walnuts, pine nuts and cucumbers. Somehow it seems closer to real people when you begin to talk of what they ate.

Jennifer Price made the most of the 230+ fragments of glass, "mostly the bits missed during cleaning up", unusual tidiness. She showed slides of elaborate whole versions of comparable vessels, some very high status pieces. Mike Fulford returned to describe The Pottery (which I would very much have liked to handle!) He explained the use of different pottery vessels - amphorae for importing wine, olive oil and fish sauce; wares that were specifically for cooking and others that were high quality luxury goods.

The final contribution was by Nigel Sunter on Reconstructing Roman Buildings. His demonstration of how the Silchester amphitheatre might be reconstructed was related to comparable work on other sites (often his own) and had a good practical, pragmatic basis, always bearing in mind the people who built and used it.

The real value of the day to me was, apart from the many items of fascinating information, the chance to hear the people who are actively working on the minutiae of the finds, each contribution seen in the context of the rest. Many thanks to Mike Fulford for organising and chairing it. What a pity it wasn't a complete marathon! But now I'll look forward even more to our visit to the 1984 excavations at Silchester on July 19th.

BARBARA APPLIN

#### MUSEUM AND LIBRARY MOVES

At the time of writing, it looks as if the Willis Museum will move to its new home at the old Town Hall in June, and that the new Chineham Library will open in July. It will obviously be a long process to set up the new Museum, but a small display will explain what is planned, the programme of temporary exhibitions will continue, and children's holiday activities will be arranged.

When the Chineham Library opens, look out for the very appropriate display on Cowdery's Down. More news to come ...

Contributions to the next Newsletter to:

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