

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

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CALENDAR

NB Training dig - see page 6

- Sat 3 Aug Outing to Christchurch Museum (Friends of the Willis Museum) see page 3
- * Wed 28 Aug ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - revised date (page 2)
- Sat 7 Sept Hampshire Field Club Centenary Conference: 'Hampshire and the Kingdom', New Hall, Winchester College
- * Thurs 12 Sept ST MARY'S ABBEY, WINCHESTER: HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY by Michael Morris
- Thurs 19 Sept 'Herbs' by Simon Davey (Friends of the Willis Museum) Willis Museum, 7.30
- * Thurs 10 Oct COWDERY'S DOWN: RECONSTRUCTING A DARK AGE SETTLEMENT by Simon James
- * Thurs 14 Nov ROMAN WINCHESTER by Ken Qualmann
- * Thurs 12 Dec THE SHEEP HAVE PAID FOR ALL by Phebe Berrow
- * Thurs 9 Jan HATCH WARREN (BRIGHTON HILL SOUTH): LATEST RESULTS by Peter Fasham
- * Thurs 13 Feb LOCAL HISTORY AND THE RECORD OFFICE by Rosemary Dunhill
- * Thurs 13 Mar to be announced
- * Thurs 10 Apr NEWNHAM IN THE PAST by Nigel Bell
- * Thurs 8 May EXCAVATIONS AT A MAJOR PREHISTORIC SITE AT POTTERNE, WILTS by Andrew Lawson

* Society activity; 7.30 pm Chute House

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Committee apologises for having to postpone the AGM and asks members to accept this as a calling notice for the new date:

Wednesday, 28th August
7.30 pm, Chute House

The Agenda remains the same and, as before, the business meeting will be followed by a slide-tape presentation on the Hampshire countryside. We hope that this will prove a more convenient date.

MARY ROSE EXCURSION

Saturday, 21st September
Leave at 9.30 am from the
north side of Churchill Way,
opposite Jackson's Garage

There are still places available for this outing, to see the 'Mary Rose' Tudor warship, now it is the right way up. It is also an opportunity to see the recently opened exhibition of finds, with an archaeological visit on the way. Our Treasurer is anxious to receive all bookings (with £1 deposit for each) so that we can confirm our arrangements with the 'Mary Rose', so please do send them to her now: Mrs Sarah Duckworth, 177 Pack Lane, Kempshott, Basingstoke. (The full cost is £5 per adult and £2.50 per child, including the entrance fees at Portsmouth).

ST MARY'S ABBEY, WINCHESTER - HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY
Lecture by Michael Morris
Thursday, 12th September, 7.30 pm, Chute House

Members who saw the excavations at St Mary's Abbey ('Nunnaminster') and remember the lecture by Annie Robinson, will look forward to hearing a further talk on the site now that there has been time to assimilate the results of the excavation. Perhaps we may learn more about the nuns? founders? eminent citizens? who were buried in those many graves.

WILLIS MUSEUM: HAIL & FAREWELL

We shall be sorry to say goodbye to Caroline Goldthorpe, who is leaving the Willis Museum for the Museum of London. Her lecture to the Society, on Victorian Fashions, gave us a taste of her expertise in costume, and the children who have enjoyed events at the museum will be particularly sorry to see her go. No doubt, though, they will be interested in the speciality of her successor, Peter Russell Jones - weapons.

The Friends' outing to Christchurch Museum on Saturday 3rd August is an opportunity to see Caroline's Costume display there. (Meet at Christchurch Museum at 11 am; own arrangements for lunch, followed by an afternoon walk.)

A LOCAL EXCURSION IN JUNE

On a day more reminiscent of March than of blazing June, a small group of members met to spend the afternoon exploring a couple of sites in the local area. After meeting at the West Ham roundabout, we first visited Woodgarston Farm. Here, situated on high ground just off the A339 and surrounded by a working farm, is the remains of a Norman mound and bailey. It turned out to be a small enclosure ringed with a ditch with steep banks of clay and flint, with a south-westerly entrance. In the enclosure under a slab of concrete topped by a rusty piece of old farm machinery, we found a well. Sprinkled with trees and inhabited now by farm animals, it was, one felt, a quiet and forgotten place.

Leaving Woodgarston Farm, we continued on to explore a larger site, Ladle Hill. This is one of the most unusual Iron Age sites in the South of England, as it is an unfinished earthwork. Indeed, on walking round the large fort it is easy to see where the groups of workers dug particular sections of the earthwork's outer ring, leaving great pieces of the outer section uncompleted. In some places the work was not even started and the marker ditch is still clearly visible. Instead of a high outer bank, the top soil was left in piles inside the site and the harder core of the ditch only was piled on the edge of the bank. Situated high above the surrounding land, with marvellous views all around, and opposite the great bastion of Beacon Hill across the valley, it is, nevertheless, an impressive place.

Walking back down the track to where we had left our cars, we could only ponder on the reasons why work on this site was abandoned, a site which is now only visited by intrepid walkers and the model aircraft enthusiasts whose planes were soaring and swooping with the larks.

JANE UNSWORTH

STONEHENGE STUDY GROUP REPORT

(Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England)
January 1985 £4.00

When the Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England took up its full responsibilities in April of last year, one of the problems it inherited from the DoE was that of Stonehenge. Everybody agrees that there is a problem, although its precise nature and best remedy are not so easily perceived.

There is something about the appeal of Stonehenge that defies logic. Its distance from the main centres of population and the limited extent of the upstanding remains seem to be out of proportion to the number of visitors it attracts, of whom there are over half a million, three-quarters being from overseas. This

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prime English tourist attraction is coming under increasing pressure from the sheer number of trampling feet.

The Report of the Committee, chaired by Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, was given a wide but specific brief: viz. to consider the option for the future protection of the monument and surrounding area. whilst at the same time providing satisfactory arrangements for viewing and appreciation of the henge, bearing in mind the need to provide for parking and catering facilities etc and the effect this will have on both the local economy and other sites in the area, and costs.

The Report spends much time assessing and identifying the problem of visitors and access, including studies on the use of roads in the immediate area.

There are about 600,000 visitors p.a. (800,000 before the present restrictions were imposed) and it is anticipated that the number will continue to rise. At peak times there are over 7,500 visitors a day, with up to 2,700 being there at a given time. Present facilities are woefully inadequate to cope with this number, and indeed certain measures to protect the monument (by roping it off and barricading with barbed wire) are by all accounts unacceptable. It is known that with the present limitations the average visit lasts only about half an hour. It is also known, from research done elsewhere, that natural turf will only withstand up to 300,000 to 400,000 visitors a year. When turf was replaced by gravel, more harm than good was done when it was scuffed up onto the stones.

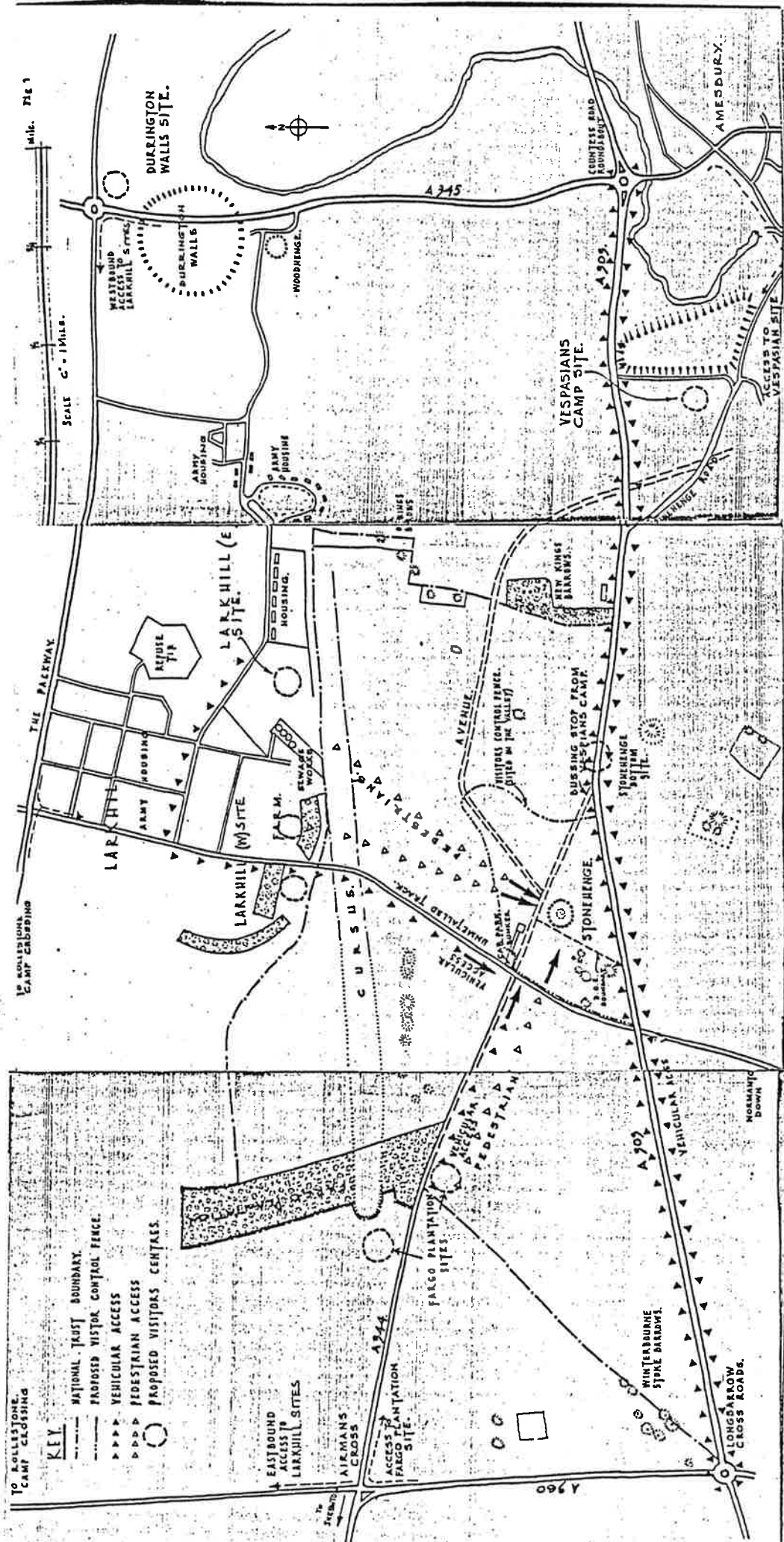
It was discerned that the majority of motor vehicles (the only way to travel to Stonehenge) approached it from the east. It was also noted that the majority of HGVs passing by travelled from east to west, the reason being that the empty lorries returning to the Mendip quarries took the shorter route home. With this in mind, the effects of closing the A344 are spelt out, a suggestion which it is appreciated causes much concern to local residents.

Having assessed the scope and urgency of the problem, the Report suggests that the options for improvement would fall into one of three categories:

- 1 keeping the visitors' centre at or very near the site
- 2 removing it to a location about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away, yet still within sight and walking distance
- 3 placing it beyond the horizon over a mile away.

With regard to the first suggestion, the possibilities would be to leave arrangements as they are now, but with limited improvements or to take them to Stonehenge Bottom where the A344 meets the A303. The advantages would be that it would be very convenient for visitors but it would offer little room for expansion.

The suggested middle distance sites include a couple of locations at Lark Hill, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the north, and a couple of places at the Fargo Plantation, a small wood a mile to the west. The advantages here would be the ample room to expand the parking and bookshop facilities and also an aesthetically pleasing approach, which in the case of the Lark Hill sites would be near the line of the 'Avenue', the traditional and 'ceremonial' approach to the henge.



Moreover, the Lark Hill West site would be on ground already in public ownership and archaeologically disturbed. The drawbacks are that all but the aged and infirm for whom special provision must be made, would have to walk about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. (It is pointed out that at Housesteads on Hadrians Wall a 20-minute walk did not seem to deter the 113,000 visitors). Steps would have to be taken to prevent illicit parking on the A303 by those wanting a free view.

The third possible locations are at Vespasians Camp, near the Amesbury bypass, or Durrington Walls a mile and a half to the north east. Both would allow the authorities to maintain complete control of access, but the operation of a Park & Ride scheme would be an unwelcome extra responsibility for management.

In every case it is recommended that the A344 be closed and the A303 be hidden by a low bank. Also the centre should have more bookshop and display facilities to make a visit more worth while.

There are some points of which the Report makes no mention, which must be taken as read: namely the relationship of the present arrangements in terms of the past. Up to the early years of this century there was a track running north-south so close that it went between the stones and the henge ditch, making the proximity of the A344 seem a reasonable distance. Moreover some of the recently fallen stones have been re-erected in concrete and there now only remains less than half of the area within the henge which is archaeologically undisturbed. The added problem of Pop Festivals receives only brief mention.

The Report does not recommend a specific conclusion, but when it was published Lord Montagu is on record as saying the Committee favoured the Lark Hill West site. The Report did point out that some of the costs, running to about £3 million, could be born by the Private Sector if due encouragement were given. Evidence was given by Heritage Projects Ltd of York Viking Centre fame.

The present position is that, having waited for three months for reflection and comment, the Report will now be actively considered by the Commission. It is hoped that, subject to the necessary acquisition of land, and common sense prevailing, the project should be completed by 1989. And one hopes it will be on the Lark Hill West site.

RICHARD DEXTER

1985/6 WEA CLASSES

Forthcoming WEA classes at the Library on Wednesday evenings are Archaeology: The Local Scene by our own Mary Oliver (10 classes starting 25th September) and Basingstoke From the Censuses 1801-1901 by Margaret Escott (10 classes starting 15th January).

TRAINING DIG

We have no dates for this yet, as crops are late. If you are interested, please ring Peter Heath (Basingstoke 27713) so that he can let you know when he hears.