

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

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CONTENTS

SPRING FROLIC
DOMESDAY IS COMING!
NEWNHAM IN THE PAST
ON COMBS AND THINGS
THE REAL VALUE OF MONEY IN
THE PAST
"A" LEVEL ARCHAEOLOGY

COUNCIL FOR BRITISH
ARCHAEOLOGY
CRISIS IN SALISBURY
HEYWOOD SUMNER CONFERENCE
VISIT TO JANE AUSTEN'S HOUSE
STOP PRESS! Pot Washing etc
For CALENDAR see back page...

COME & ENJOY
OUR
SPRING FROLIC

ON
SE DAVID'S DAY

SAT MARCH 1ST 1986

AT

7.30 pm

IN CHURCH COTTAGE

WITH

FUN FOOD WINE

ADULTS £2.50

CHILDREN £1.00.

LUCKY NUMBER on
tickets bought
before the day!

SPRING FROLIC!

Our usual Christmas Social has turned into a SPRING FROLIC! to be held at Church Cottage at 7.30 pm on Saturday 1st March and we hope to see many members and friends there. Wine, "eats" and entertainment (volunteers to make sweet courses should contact Betty Waters - phone 469357). As a variation on our "Links with the Past", do bring any objects of interest, particularly any that are either Welsh or connected with Easter or Spring. Tickets at the February meeting or from the Treasurer (Mrs Sarah Duckworth, 177 Pack Lane, Kempshott, Basingstoke - tel 22904) £2.50 adults, £1 children. A lucky number on tickets bought beforehand!

DOMESDAY IS COMING!"Domesday and the Normans"

Lecture by Mike Hughes at 7.30 on Thursday 13th March at Chute House

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, this is a special lecture for the 900th anniversary year of the Domesday Book. It will be an introduction to the "Domesday 900" Exhibition to be staged in the Great Hall, Winchester from 27th March to 1st November (the exhibition will be open every day of the week 10 am-6 pm - till 8 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays in June, July and August; adults £2, children & OAPs £1, family tickets for 2 adults and up to 3 children £5).

"Domesday 1086-1986" - Autumn Excursion

Our annual excursion on Saturday 20th September will be centred round a visit to the exhibition based on the Domesday Book at the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane. There are many other interesting things to see in that neighbourhood, and we'll hunt out all the details. Meanwhile, do keep the date free.

NEWNHAM IN THE PAST

Lecture by Nigel Bell at 7.30 on Thursday 10th April at Chute House

Nigel Bell has been working for some years now on the history of Newnham, based on records and local knowledge. It is well over five years since he last spoke to the Society on this, and we look forward to his update.

CONGRATULATIONS!

to our member Kathy Haworth who has just been awarded an Open University degree.



ON COMBS AND THINGS

This little note is in response to a request for information about the Iron Age comb on our Newsletter heading, by a member who joined us since its adoption as our logo. Our Editor thought it might be of interest to other recent members.

The comb came from a Society rescue excavation at Viables Farm, Basingstoke, undertaken in 1974-6 in advance of development (which is still to take place!) The site was an enclosed farmstead of Iron Age/Romano-British date typical of many other in the area, but the comb and its associated finds were found in circumstances far from typical of the period.

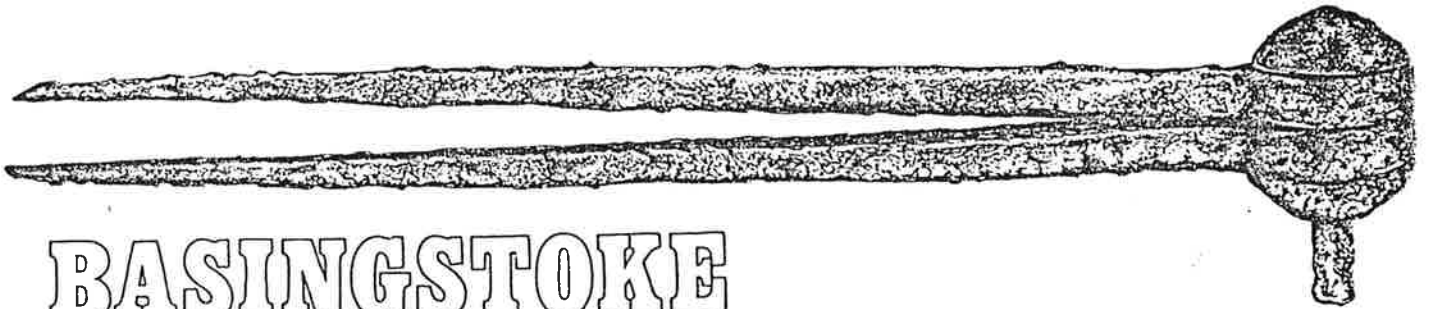
Pit 5, apparently a normal circular storage pit, backfilled after use, was half-sectioned in the normal way and aroused interest when human bones appeared during the taking of soil samples. The rest of the pit was therefore excavated and was found to contain two female burials with the skeletons of two sheep, parts of two horses and parts of two cows disposed in such a way as to suggest that they were offerings to the dead. In a small cist at the base of the pit were contained four combs, two toggles, two terret rings and a fragment of iron blade, with other unfinished antler work near one of the bodies.

Although none of the finds is exceptional individually, their association together is very unusual. Unlike the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, during the Iron Age there is very little evidence for disposal of the dead; the bulk of the population must have been laid to rest in a way which left no archaeological trace. From the Middle Iron Age onwards, some instances of burial in pits are known from southern Britain - eg 70 individuals so buried at Danebury, and the Viables burials are of this type. But no other burial has the inclusion of such a quantity of grave goods. Intriguing suggestions as to the relative status of the two ladies can be made, not only from their position, with one lady crouched at the feet of the other, but also from the apparent pairing of the finds - one pair of decorated combs, one of undecorated, one silvered bronze terret ring, one of polished antler - with one of the pair being better than the other. The animal bones vary too in age and completeness. The full significance of this remarkable burial is unlikely to be understood until there is similar evidence from other sites for comparison.

The comb chosen for the Society's logo is the more complete of the two decorated examples, and the ring and dot decoration and shape of the comb can be paralleled in the area. These combs are usually described as being weaving combs - but that is another story!

The comb became our logo in January 1982. The Archaeological Society had merged with the Willis Society in 1980 to form the Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society and, after using up stocks of old paper, the opportunity was taken to change the logo with the new title. The old logo had also incorporated one of our more striking finds - the Roman dividers from the Society's excavations at Ructstalls Hill. These dividers, found in exceptionally good condition in a fourth century level, are unusual in the stoutness of their design

and were more probably used by a mason or carpenter than a draughtsman. The dividers were the Society's logo from 1975, and they and the Viables find are on show in the new Willis Museum.



BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

It is perhaps worth saying for more recent members, who may be wondering why the Society in its earlier days had a much more active excavation programme than it does today, that the Society was indeed formed to undertake rescue excavations, because there was at that time no one else to do so in this area. Happily that is no longer so, and the Society is probably well advised to concentrate on supporting the major excavation projects undertaken by others - such as the Wessex Archaeological Committee (WAC) at Brighton Hill South. However, it can be said that the Society has taken too passive a role in recent years, partly because of accommodation problems. The Museum can no longer provide a room, as it once did, and activities such as pot washing and finds processing in members' homes is not a long-term solution. Your committee has been exploring various possibilities for a long time, believing that if we could find a suitable "club room" for more regular meetings, all kinds of exciting possibilities would be open to us - planning and processing fieldwalking, study sessions on artefacts, drawing finds and sections, studying aerial photographs, to name but a few. It would, of course, mean a greater commitment of time from those members who wanted to take part in practical activities, and we would perhaps attract new members more interested in the practical side. We are pleased that we can offer such a varied and interesting lecture programme each year - but is it really enough? Perhaps our logo should not so much remind us of past achievements in excavation as push us into greater efforts and activities in the future.

See STOP
PRESS! p 8

References "An Iron Age burial from Viables Farm, Basingstoke", M Millett and D Russell, Arch. Journal 1982 (offprint in Society library and Basingstoke Reference Library)

"Excavation of an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement at Ructstalls Hill, Basingstoke" M Oliver and B Applin, Proc. Hants Field Club 1979 (a few copies still available to members, 50p)

THE REAL VALUE OF MONEY IN THE PAST

Have you ever wondered just how rich one of Jane Austen's characters was when he had an income of £5,000 a year or what was the real cost of a loaf of bread at the time of the Black Death?

Comparisons of the value of money over long periods of time are difficult to quantify and are erratic because patterns of expenditure change drastically as new products appear and old ones are superseded or modified. Nevertheless, it is possible to a degree to compare the value of everyday items of expenditure throughout the centuries so long as one refrains from trying to be too precise. The table on page 6 shows how this can be done (figures made available by courtesy of the Bank of England Economics Division).

But first a word of warning. Once you go back to a date earlier than, say, 1700, the cost of large items of expenditure such as building a castle no longer ring true, since many of the costs would have been hidden, for example by the use of slaves and barter etc. However, for small items such as a loaf of bread, a pound of salt and a pint of ale, the comparison is quite good.

The table, which is based on an index where 1974 prices are 100, is used in the following way. To calculate the present day value of an historic cost, you take the historic cost, divide it by the historic index and multiply it by today's index; thus a horse costing £10 in 1880 would now be worth £243 because £10 divided by 14.8 and multiplied by 360 equals £243.24. Likewise by doing the converse, a pint of beer costing £1 today would have been valued at £0.04 or 10d in 1880.

On looking at the table as a whole, there is another point worth bearing in mind. Although the index moves in ones and twos, before 1770 the percentage increase over certain periods is fairly large. For example, in Queen Elizabeth I's reign the increase (decrease in value) was over 100%. This is a direct reflection on the mercantilist philosophy whereby the import of gold and precious stones from the Spanish Main was mistakenly believed to be the import of wealth. No wonder there was so much poverty amongst certain classes.

And finally, how many other countries in the world, I wonder, have the same unit of currency today as they did in the 13th century and is it true that if a monetary debt at that time could be proven today it could be discharged in the same unit of currency today as then, albeit at an absurdly reduced value?

RICHARD DEXTER

<u>Level of Consumer Prices</u>		(Jan 1974 = 100)			
1270	1.4	1580	4.1	1845	15.4
1280	1.4	1590	4.8	1850	13.8
1290	1.3	1600	5.7	1855	17.4
1300	1.4	1610	7.3	1860	15.3
1310	1.6	1620	7.5	1865	14.8
1320	2.1	1630	8.0	1870	15.6
1330	1.6	1640	8.4	1875	15.6
1340	1.3	1650	9.5	1880	14.8
1350	1.7	1660	9.4	1885	13.2
1360	2.0	1670	8.6	1890	12.6
1370	2.0	1680	8.6	1895	11.6
1380	1.6	1690	8.2	1900	12.3
1390	1.5	1700	9.2	1905	12.7
1400	1.6	1710	9.4	1910	13.5
1410	1.6	1720	8.5	1915	17.6
1420	1.5	1730	8.3	1920	35.5
1430	1.6	1740	8.3	1925	25.1
1440	1.5	1750	8.4	1930	22.5
1450	1.4	1760	9.6	1935	20.4
1460	1.4	1770	11.3	1940	26.2
1470	1.5	1780	11.4	1945	28.9
1480	1.6	1790	12.8	1950	33.0
1490	1.5	1800	22.3	1955	43.1
1500	1.5	1805	21.7	1960	49.1
1510	1.5	1810	23.8	1965	58.4
1520	1.5	1815	20.9	1970	73.1
1530	1.9	1820	19.3	1975	134.0
1540	2.2	1825	19.9	1980	263.0
1550	2.3	1830	16.3	1985	360.0
1560	3.6	1835	14.6		
1570	4.2	1840	18.3		

"A" LEVEL ARCHAEOLOGY - CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Following the appearance of an advertisement in "Popular Archaeology" offering an "A" Level Course to be run by Central Manchester College, St John's Centre, I sent for details. I received the course details plus the syllabus. The course runs over two years and does include a study or project to be submitted in addition to the examinations. The project has to be approved, although practical help is given in your choice.

As it is now some years (more than I like to acknowledge) since I did the "O/A" Level, it has given me pleasure to start again. This course has the advantage of not needing alot of expensive books and most can be easily borrowed.

The course is the usual type of correspondence course, with lecture notes and a number of exercises and an essay. The exercises and essay have to be researched from various sources and I have been helped by friends within the Society whose help has been gladly given on specialised subjects - and one can always learn from others, which is very nice

when information sources are slight or obscure.

I would hope some othermembers will give the course a try. The lecturer is very prompt in marking your work and returning the papers with helpful comments. One cannot be right all the time and, being me, I would love to debate some of his comments, but that's archaeology!!!

Come on, some of you, and join me in this course! We live in an area where we have everything for us in most subjects it covers. I would be pleased to talk to anyone and help them from my experience of starting to learn again, and show how it has given me a renewal of interest in the academic side of archaeology.

ERIC E. ROBINSON

COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY

If you won't be able to get to our March lecture, there is an earlier chance to hear Mike Hughes talking about The Normans and Domesday after the CBA Group 12 Annual Business Meeting (2pm) and Alison Borthwick's lecture on The Archaeology of the Salisbury Plain Training Area (3.15) on Saturday, 22nd February in the lecture theatre of Salisbury Museum.

CRISIS IN SALISBURY

A leaflet issued by the Wilts County Council Library & Museum Service outlines the imminent threat to the archaeology of Salisbury by proposed redevelopment of over 10% of the mediaeval city. An inserted slip gives people the opportunity to express concern and support and to request further information.

HEYWOOD SUMNER CONFERENCE

A day conference on the artist and archaeologist Heywood Sumner (best known for his splendidly illustrated reports on his excavations of New Forest Roman pottery kilns) will be held at the Guildhall, Winchester on Saturday, March 8th. Details from Miss E Lewis, 75 Hyde Street, Winchester SO23 7DW.

VISIT TO JANE AUSTEN'S HOUSE

The Alton History & Archaeology Society invites members of our Society to join them on a visit to Jane Austen's House (and Museum), Chawton, when the new Curator, Miss Jean Bowden, will give an introduction to Jane Austen and the Museum. This will be held on Saturday 17th May at 2.30 pm. Meet outside Jane Austen's House, Chawton. (directions in next Newsletter).

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