

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



N E W S L E T T E R

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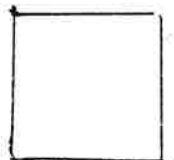
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CALENDAR

- * Thursday 11 Dec INTRODUCTION TO THE MUSEUM OF THE IRON AGE (David Allen) and CHEESE & WINE PARTY 7.30 pm, Chute House
- Friday 19 Dec Annual Christmas Get Together (Friends of the Willis Museum) 7.30 Willis Museum
- * Thursday 8 Jan BURSLEDON WINDMILL (John Reynolds)
- 28-31 Jan The Voyage of the "Basingstoke" at The Central Studio (see page 2)
- Thursday 7 Feb The Re-birth of the Basingstoke Canal (Audio-visual presentation by Robin Higgs) 7.30 Willis Museum (Friends)
- * Thursday 12 Feb A HISTORY WORKSHOP ON HOOK (Glynis Wilsdon)
- Friday 6 March Mediaeval Timber-framed Buildings in Hampshire (Edward Roberts) Herbert Jarman Lecture Theatre, King Alfred's College, Winchester, 7.30 (Gampshire Field Club)

* Society activity 7.30 pm, Chute House



SUBSCRIPTIONS

If your Newsletter has a X on the front page, it means that we have not received your subscription for 1986-7, and regretfully this is the last Newsletter that can be sent. If you wish to renew your membership, please send your subscription to Mrs Sarah Duckworth, 177 Pack Lane, Basingstoke (£6 single, £8 family, £3 OAP/student).

THE MUSEUM OF THE IRON AGE and CHEESE AND WINE PARTY

The Committee has decided on an experiment to give members a chance to chat with each other. So our Social evening this year will take the form of a short informal talk by David Allen on the new Museum of the Iron Age at Andover, followed by a cheese and wine party:

7.30 pm on Thursday 11th December at Chute House

Visitors are welcome at the usual entrance fee of 50p, but there is no charge for members.

BURSLEDON WINDMILL

Thursday 8th January 1987

Our first lecture of 1987 will be on Bursledon Windmill by John Reynolds of the Hampshire County Architects Department. This tower mill is now being restored to working order.

THE VOYAGE OF THE "BASINGSTOKE"

Basingstoke local history is a fertile ground for drama - the Central Studio Youth Theatre have sent us a notice of a play which promises much of local and historical interest:

The Central Studio Youth Theatre will be presenting THE VOYAGE OF THE BASINGSTOKE at the Central Studio from Wednesday, 28th January to Saturday, 31st January.

The show is based on documented historical incidents and centres around the figure of Alec Harmsworth and his voyage in the "Basingstoke", a canal barge built in 1910 to navigate the Basingstoke Canal. The canal at that time was in danger of being closed unless it was proved that it was still of use as a working waterway.

The play has been painstakingly researched and tells of the struggle to assemble the barge and the crew, and the frustrations, disasters and exhilaration of the journey itself.

Do they reach their destination?

Come aboard the Central Studio, end of January, and find out.

ESSO PIPELINE BOOK

Lynn Freshwater asks if whoever has this book can let her know.

LIVING ARCHAEOLOGY

The annual conference of the Hampshire Field Club's Archaeology section took a rather different form this year: the morning session followed the usual pattern of papers and discussion, but the afternoon was devoted to practical demonstrations of various ancient crafts and techniques. The general consensus seems to have been that it was all a lot of fun as well as being very informative.

Peter Reynolds, Director of the Butser Ancient Farm Project, began with a stern warning that "living archaeology" was something of a contradiction in terms, that it is impossible for twentieth-century man really to understand what it was like to live in, say, the Iron Age, as our terms of reference and standards of comparison are so completely different. However, the value of experiment in establishing reasonable hypotheses about the past has been proved. He reviewed the archaeological evidence - somewhat rapidly, as time ran short! - on which the Butser work is based, making the point as he often has in the past, that the Iron Age farmer was an efficient operator.

David Johnston, of the Department of Adult Education, Southampton University, continued with a paper on flint working, showing very interesting slides of modern flintworkers and also of Scandinavian experiments in polishing stone axes and felling trees with the genuine article. After lunch he followed up his talk with a demonstration of flint knapping, leather apron on his knee. Members may remember the demonstration given to this Society some years back by the late Chris Draper - it really is fascinating to see the familiar artefacts emerge beneath skilled hands.

Then came an amusing and heartfelt plea for schoolchildren to learn about the past by participation - "by eye, ear and back" - from Peter Stone of the Archaeology in Education Project at Southampton University. The day organised by the Project at Barry Junior School was voted a great success.

Geoff Denford of Winchester Museum has made a special study of the Kimmeridge shale industry, small scale working of a particular geological outcrop with a few popular products, until the Roman period, when as many as 50 different types of artefact have been identified from as far afield as North Wales and East Anglia. In the afternoon there was an impressive demonstration of lathe-turning, using a special flint blade to produce a popular kind of armlet.

The last case study was presented by Roman cookery expert, Maureen Locke, who spoke about the distinctive aroma attached to the cook and remarked on by Roman writers - and very noticeable in the train going home! The cooking platform she used was similar to that found at Silchester, effective both indoors and outdoors with either earthenware cook pots or metal vessels, reaching a temperature high enough to melt plastic, as she accidentally discovered. The dishes she cooked in the afternoon smelt and

tasted delicious. I was particularly intrigued to learn that for the ever popular liquamen fish sauce, included in most Roman recipes, she used mackerel, following the old list of ingredients and methods. I can confirm her opinion that it tasted of mackerel, and with wine making a sauce over fried carrots, was not unpleasant.

Other demonstrations included encaustic tile-making, with very convincing results in terms of glaze colour, mediaeval dress-making, which looked amazingly familiar, and weaving on an upright loom, without a weaving comb. Altogether a fascinating day, which did make the technology of the past more comprehensible if not "alive".

MARY OLIVER

IMAGES OF THE PAST, IMAGES FOR THE FUTURE

"Take care when you open that box of old photographs in your attic! The wrapping paper may hold the only clues as to the identities of the people in the photos." So warned Mary Ray of the Photographic Archives, Petersfield at the Winchester Conference on Photographic and Film Archives (18th October). A rapt audience stirred guiltily as they were regaled with horror tales of the terrible conditions (for photos) of your average attic.*

The previous speaker, Frank Green (Test Valley Archaeological Committee) enlightened us about the variety of archival photographic work, involving microfilm and photographic records of maps, documents etc. Photographs of buildings are especially important before or during demolition, to show construction, or even while being altered. However, the lack of permanency of transparencies or videos is a worry to the modern film archivist he said.

Before we got down to the technical nitty gritty of looking after old photographs, with Elizabeth Edwards, we were much entertained by an amusing speaker from the West Sussex Record Office, Alison McCann. She had been working on a mammoth task of cleaning, storing and indexing some 70,000 glass negatives taken by George Garland, mostly around Petworth in the 1930s. The collection is stored at the Old Estate Office at Petworth House and contains a large variety of scenes of life in the 1930s, from the Petworth Workhouse to local events, the farming year, local crafts and posed "rustics" in cottage interiors - which are important for the authentic backgrounds. She commented on the usefulness of named and dated portraits particularly for the background information in the picture.

Elizabeth Edwards of the Pitt Rivers Museum gave a fascinating account of the best conditions for the storage of old photographs and negatives, stressing that if you can do nothing else, keep

the temperature and humidity stable, as it is the fluctuations of these two factors which cause the most damage, as well as handling ("a good catalogue saves handling").

After lunch, we left still photographs and enjoyed part of a video film of Boughton Village life compiled from old films, explained by David Lee (BBC TV South). Seven 16 mm films came next, with a talk by Maryann Gomes of the Manchester Polytechnic.

Stanley Richardson (Chairman of the Winchester Cine Club) rounded off the day with a hilarious showing of his cine films of Winchester in the fifties, accompanied by his very drole voice-over commentaries. Everyone rushed home to raid their attics, making mental notes to write names and dates on the back of family snaps for archivists of the future.

*Information Booklet by the Society of Archivists entitled Archival Care of Still Photographs available post-free from Mr Lamb, Hampshire Records Office for £2.

PATRICIA PRATT

ARCHAEOLOGY IN LONDON 1970-1986
at The Museum of London

There are two Londons. There is the capital of the United Kingdom, with the British Museum, Public Record Office, the National and the Tate Galleries, and there is the City of London, the ancient and original "square mile" which lies between the Tower of London and Temple Bar - where Fleet Street joins the Strand. The City falls under the jurisdiction of the Corporation of London, who are very proud of their identity and their long and continuous history.

In the late 1950s, the City was suddenly reminded of its great historical potential when the developers came across, without notice, a temple dedicated to the Roman god Mithras. At the time the only concession to History that could be made was to reconstruct the temple as a ruin in a nearby forecourt.

Since then, however, things have been different and, as a result of a marvellous degree of cooperation between the Planning Department, the Museum and the Developers, the City of London now has a whole series of carefully recorded excavations to its credit and a treasure house of finds.

These finds are now the subject of a temporary exhibition in the Museum of London in the Barbican complex, running on until the New Year; admission is free (Tuesday - Saturday).

On entering the Museum, you find yourself standing looking up at the mediaeval water front at Billingsgate, seen as at low tide from a boat with a reconstructed muddy river bed at floor level (this time there are no smells). The huge timbers rise about 8 to 10 feet above you, revetting the original wharf.

But this is just a scene setter. The exhibition itself is in the Exhibition Area round to the right. Because the finds are so numerous and the stratification is so dense and continuous, it has been possible to employ a somewhat imaginative method of display whereby many of the exhibits are grouped together by subject matter or association and labelled in different colours, the colours representing differing periods such as Roman brown, Saxon pink, Mediaeval blue and Post-Mediaeval red.

The earliest period of continuous occupation is Roman, although there are traces of Iron Age which are more evident by their cultural differences rather than their date which is essentially Early Roman.

There is much Roman masonry in London that is still upstanding, for example the west wall of St Martin's - within- Ludgate Church, a Wren church, is a Roman wall that has survived because it formed a boundary and still does. Also there are exposed footings in the mediaeval walls near the Museum which are Roman. There is on display some very fine Roman wall plaster which is sufficiently complete to show a delightful picture of a human figure with filigree surrounds. Saxon remains are more scanty, especially as the Saxons tended to dwell outside the Roman town, but the mediaeval re-occupation is very much still with us as seen in the layout of streets and their names. There is continuity, though, under the famous Wren churches, where Roman, Saxon, mediaeval and later are all layered on top of each other as in the crypt of St Bride's, Fleet Street.

The subjects of "Kitchen ware" and "Around the house" provide splendid pieces of Samian ware with green 14th century glazed earthenware. There are some quaint mediaeval water taps with handles the shape of cockerels and other designs that leave the imagination running amok. There is a Roman wooden window spar with a countersunk slit for a glass pane with fragments of contemporary glass beside it and both Roman and mediaeval door locks and sundry keys. One wonders what the story is that lies behind the seven keys still strung together on a chain, that somebody had mislaid. Roman tiles and wooden shingles lie next to tiles and shingles of a millenium later, both looking very alike.

Seeing small personal objects across the ages just sitting there looking as they did when in use makes one feel very close to their unknown and erstwhile owners - the Roman pottery hand lamps and the moulds of imported lamps from which new local ones were made, the Tudor pocket sundial the size of a matchbox with a magnetic compass underneath it to set the dial above with its miniature pointer that cast its shadow on a beautifully carved face.

It is obvious that the commercial activity around the wharves was the same in Roman times as it was centuries later, judging by the amount of customs' seals found in the mud. Just like today, they were two small discs of lead that were squeezed together encasing a knot in the twine used for the packaging. The later seals were of wax, the seal moulds being the objects retrieved. There are many examples of phoney and humorous traders at work, like the one whose seal says "crede michi" (believe me).

I found some of the most touching exhibits were personal garments and small possessions. Roman leather sandals have been found with their thongs still tied in an identifiable way and leaving clear indentations where the toes had rested, and a mediaeval shoe has the end toe-cap slit open to relieve pressure on a bunion and/or turned up toes. There are well-preserved examples of the pointed slipper whose points became so long that their length had to be limited by law to two inches. Apparently to keep them stiff and straight they were stuffed with moss.

Of the personal possessions there were pairs of spectacles, wire-framed and tortoise shelled, a miniature pocket inkwell and tiny balances for testing coins and gold, all ranging from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Possibly the most amusing exhibit was to be found among the gaming pieces through the ages: chessmen, counters, dice and so on. There was a beautifully carved set of dice about the size of dried peas, and beside them was an X-ray photograph which showed that they had been impregnated with mercury so that some fell low numbers up and some with high numbers up - of fifteenth century date.

In the last display case there were tokens and souvenirs which had been brought back by pilgrims and travellers, little effigies of saints from various shrines both in England and the Continent - the only difference between the tourist trade then and now was that the quality of artefact has somewhat deteriorated today. The little discs, plaques, badges and tokens, both in bas relief and profile, of the fourteenth century, illustrate and recall a very real world, of which the Canterbury Tales were a literary description, and it must have been a very noisy world at that, since the energy and movement is so graphically depicted.

Although most of the exhibits belong to the Museum, this is only a temporary exhibition and is well worth making an effort to see.

RICHARD DEXTER

ARCHAEOLOGY OF LANDSCAPE

Francis Green will be giving the 1986 O G S Crawford Memorial Lecture on "New Approaches to the Archaeology of Landscape" at 5 pm on Saturday, 6th December at the Turos Merchant's Hall, Southampton.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN BRITAIN - NEW VIEWS OF THE PAST

Spurred on by my daughter's enthusiasm to see Lindow Man, I recently visited this British Museum special exhibition of archaeological discoveries and achievements since the last war. I had heard that it was good, but was surprised at how large and comprehensive it was - too much to absorb in the 2½ hours available, certainly too much to cover in a Newsletter review. The selection of themes and detail I mention might not be everyone's highlights from the exhibition, but perhaps it might encourage some to visit it before it closes in February.

Considerable advances in knowledge of the Neolithic have taken place in the last 40 years, covered in two sections of the exhibition. The potential of the wetlands, such as the Fens and Somerset Levels, have been a particularly rich source of information because of the preservation of organic materials. The reconstruction of part of a trackway, which was built to link settlements in times of high water, was particularly fascinating, the different timbers chosen for specific function and even the spiders faithfully reproduced. Work on two other classes of Neolithic monuments - causewayed camps and long barrows - was also highlighted, the camps at Hambledon Hill and Critchley Hill, illustrating that they may not all have had the same function; indeed each monument probably had a varied history. The evidence for excarnation at Hambledon Hill adds another function to the long-held "regional market" idea, and both Hambledon and Critchley produced batteries of arrowheads, suggesting a defensive role in at least one phase. Long barrows too have been shown to be very complex structures, with mound construction coming at the end of a long ritual procedure which was probably connected with ancestor worship. Both these classes of monument hint at the complexity of society, but it is to the north of Scotland, and the excellent preservation of the stone house that we must look to see how ordinary people lived, not only at the well-known Skara Brae village, but also at the Knap of Havar, Balbridie and Ballyglass.

Hampshire was well represented when it came to the Iron Age, with a selection of finds from Danebury, including a large map of its surroundings, showing the results of the landscape survey; and also information about the Butser Ancient Farm Project. I was particularly thrilled to see the finds from the recently discovered chariot burials at Garton Slack, East Yorkshire. Here two men had swords with bronze scabbards which were displayed with replicas so that the curvilinear Celtic decoration could be more clearly seen. And a rich lady had an iron mirror, a brooch set with gold and coral, and a little cylindrical bronze box with lid attached by chain and, again, engraved ornament, which must have held something very precious. There was a full sized mock-up of one of the burials, with chariot dismantled around the body and joints of pork beside it.

There were many little items that gave particular pleasure, like the extraordinary pot lid from a cinerary urn in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Spong Hill, with an enigmatic seated human figure; a delightful primitive face jug from the deserted mediaeval village at Netherton; the small insignificant fragments of wood, miraculously preserved at Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall, which have added a new dimension to knowledge of what it was like to be a Roman soldier on the northern frontier; the newly discovered Iron Age bronze oval shield with its restrained and satisfying ornament, from Chertsey. I thought as we went into the exhibition - through a vast timber palisade - that it might be a little gimmicky, but the standard of presentation was very high, and included video film and many excellent models.

But undoubtedly the star of the exhibition was Lindow Man, right at the end. It is curious, the effect that sad leathery little torso has, with its squashed face - the oldest preserved remains of a fellow Briton yet discovered. Perhaps it is the savagery of the rituals, indicated by the treatment of the body - blows to the head, garotting and throat slitting - which is most unnerving. We may feel we can comprehend the way of life suggested by the Danebury evidence - or even our own Ructstalls Hill - but this way of death implies a motivation outside our experience.