

Visits to the WARG excavation in August 2018

For our summer outing this year the Southampton Archaeology Society planned to visit the WARG excavation where they hoped to find a 'lost' royal manor at Barton Stacey, Hampshire. Three of us went for the Open Day Sunday 26th August, a very wet day – but on arrival at 12.00 we found the diggers had left and only the director with two assistants were in the marquee. In spite of the downpour they gave us a tour and we enjoyed the displays, and on Monday Diana and Clive Barnes had better luck - as reported below!

“SAS members were invited to visit the promising dig in Barton Stacey, near Andover, on August Bank Holiday this year. The appointed day was Sunday, but it was absolutely pouring with rain, so we chickened out, but went over on the Monday. The diggers were having a coffee break when we arrived, but Keith willingly put his drink down and gave us and another couple a guided tour. He showed us a field full of interesting looking lumps and bumps, and the diggers had opened up 5 trenches. Sadly, apart from a few bits of robbed wall which had been identified by geophysical surveying, they hadn't found anything of any significance, but they plan to dig again. Inside the marquee, though, there were some excellent information boards by the local history group: two zigzagging sets of them, with illustrated information on both sides, and we spent ages reading all about the history of Barton Stacey.

The parish takes its name from Saxon times, when the village was Bertun (“ber” or barley and “tun” or place – another name for farmyard?), a Royal Manor of Edward the Confessor. In 1206 the Manor was bestowed on Sir Rogo de Stacey and became the Berton of Stacey or just Barton Stacey. The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book as part of the ancient demesne of the crown and provided ‘a half a day's farm of King Edward's farm’.

The Normans left their mark in the parish with the fine church, which still has some 12th century stonework, among the mostly 13th century building which forms the largest part of the church today. There are Iron Age remains not too far away, (including Danebury) some houses dating to 16th Century, and some useful historic records. There are no thatched roofs on the cottages in Barton Stacey, as in 1792 a spark from the village forge set a great fire raging which destroyed many of the houses. But the village centre has a 200-year old pub, The Swan Inn, which sits opposite the church. In 1830 agricultural workers in many parts of England protested against their social conditions, and men from Barton Stacey and neighbouring parishes petitioned King William IV for parliamentary reform. Some men went to remonstrate with local farmers, parsons and landowners, and these uprisings – part of the “Swing Riots” – led to severe penalties: three men were transported, and two hanged – all are named. The uprising is commemorated in a plaque on the outside wall of the “Coach and Horses” public house in nearby Sutton Scotney. (No, we didn't go and “check it out”!) Excavations for an extension to the burial ground adjacent to the church in 1999 found numerous interesting bottles from the area, as well as a silver thimble from around the time of King William IV (1830-1835).

So there may still be some more information to find out about Barton Stacey, and certainly this very active group of local people will be continuing their work next summer.

<https://www.bartonstacey-pc.co.uk/about/history/>“

Diana (and Clive) Barnes

p.s. Volunteers are welcome to join the team for WARG digs, usually in late August. If anyone is interested we could arrange dates/transport in due course. Please contact me on sarahvhanna@hotmail.com