



Southampton Archaeology Society

January 2021 Newsletter

Dear members

We're already a month into 2021 and we've had more cold weather here than for many years, while the virus seems far from fading away. But with longer daylight hours and the rapid roll-out of the vaccines there is hope on the horizon, and I do hope you're all safe and well, and keeping active.

One highlight of this situation for SAS has been the ability to run our 2020/21 lecture programme on Zoom, and we're learning quickly as we go. The lectures have gone well: **Mayflower Lives** by Martyn Whittock presented a masterly overview of the place of that voyage in forging American identity (and we hope to have a review of the book in a future issue); then a double bill in December with Andy Russel talking about Southampton Archaeology Unit's work last year, followed by storyteller Michael O'Leary's seasonal tale, which held us spellbound. Please see our website www.southamptonarchaeology.uk for reports if you missed these events. But just before Christmas 2020 we heard that Andy Russel had been suddenly taken ill, and he's now taking an extended period off work – best wishes to Andy for his recovery.

The lectures on Zoom are proving popular and numbers taking part have increased from about 24 'devices' in November to 31 in January, and people are attending from further away especially in the dark winter months. A report on the January talk, **Axes Bold as Love** by Katharine Walker is included in this issue. It was a fascinating discussion of the detective work involved in the study of axe-heads and their origins, and many thanks to Mandy Kesby for her comprehensive notes. Thank you also to Martyn Dowell and the U3A Old Testament study group whose explorations have reached the story of Joseph; and to John Langran for memories of past excavations in Basingstoke, where a new story has recently emerged from old bones. We look forward to the lectures still to come this spring, details of which are given below; and a poster for our next talk on Tuesday 9th February is attached.

Before I close I would like to mention that we shall be seeking a new Hon Treasurer and also a new Chair for the SAS committee, when we hold our Annual General Meeting on 11th May 2021. The meeting will start with acceptance of the 2020 Annual Report and Financial statement, which have been circulated to members although the AGM 2020 was delayed and then cancelled last autumn. John Langran wishes to retire after four years as Treasurer, and I have now served three years as Chair. No special knowledge is needed, just people with a love of archaeology and history, with energy and a little time to spare. Contact details are on the back page and if you would like to know more please get in touch.

With best wishes

Sarah

SAS Mayflower Study Day 2021

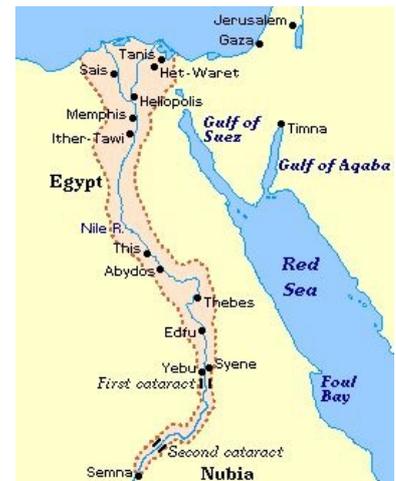
The committee of Southampton Archaeology Society has decided that we should cancel our Study Day **Southampton & Hampshire in the time of the Mayflower**, which was previously postponed to 24th April 2021. We are most grateful to everyone who had booked places on the earlier dates last year, and to the speakers who stayed with us through the two previous changes, but with the present uncertain situation it would not be possible to hold the event in April. We hope very much to be able to reassemble a similar programme line-up, perhaps in autumn 2021 or summer 2022 – so watch this space, as they say!

Old Testament Studies IV: Joseph

Martyn Dowell continues the saga of the Hebrew tribes and their shifting alliances down to the 'exile' in Egypt. This USA group now meets on Zoom and they look forward to meeting in person later in the year.

We know from international affairs of the time that the Abrahams must have been settled in southern Canaan for at least a century, perhaps two, before having any meaningful dealings with Egypt. This period was not without strife, however. As the Abraham name died out, the bulk of the settlers took the title Isaac, but a substantial number known as Ishmael broke away, settling a number of towns represented as 'sons' of Ishmael. A little later the Esau group split away and aligned themselves with the Ishmaelites, becoming the Edomites, after an acrimonious and violent parting which caused Jacob's followers to flee all the way back to Haran, where familial ties were still retained. These two groups became autonomous, never to be considered part of Jewry thereafter.

Jacob's group remained in Haran long enough to marry into their ancestors' families, and Jacob the individual is represented as fathering twelve children, including Joseph, Levi, Judah, Benjamin and Dan, which are of course tribes of Israel, and Jacob himself becomes synonymous with Israel. It is unlikely that all the later tribes really do descend from one family, but means, I think, that these visitors fomented divisions among the Haran Hebrews, which culminated in a much larger and richer group of tribes returning to Canaan, leaving the Haran population decimated. We do not hear of them again. The parting was difficult, and of interest was the stealing of household gods, a glimmer of proof that Hebrews were not at this point worshipping Yahweh only, or eschewing idols. On the return journey they pass through Edomite territory and make a peace treaty, attempt to settle in Shechem, but after a battle they spread towards the south, ultimately to the vale of Hebron.



*Ancient Egypt and land of Canaan.
Pinterest.com*

All this upheaval may have been related to wider political events. By 1700bc middle kingdom Egypt had collapsed completely, and an incursion of semitic people came to control the delta region and most of Canaan as well. These were the Hyksos ('shepherd kings') Pharaohs. Their name suggests they had much in common with the Hebrews, and they demonstrated their incompetence in running the settled agrarian



*Kidnapping of Joseph and his 'coat of many colours'.
Image: Pinterest.com*

country of Egypt during a period of famine. This is where Joseph comes in. The name of Isaac has died out, and all now is about the emerging tribes of Israel, who are in rivalry once again. They all hate Joseph's party, because he (they) seem to be doing better at the expense of the rest, and force him (them) into exile in the southern desert. The stories of Joseph are very beguiling and it is easy to believe that he turned around Egypt's fortunes singlehandedly, but suffice it to say that the small contingent, having found rich pickings, attracted a much larger migration into Egypt. By no means all the Hebrews migrated, and we shall meet them again after the Exodus.

The Joseph stories, whether true or not, contain some interesting insights. Firstly, kidnapping for ransom in the middle east is nothing new. It has often been said to originate in medieval times, but was clearly alive and well in antiquity if not in the Bronze Age! Secondly, it probably was migrant Hebrew labourers who built the new storehouses Joseph is said to have recommended to Pharaoh. When famine came, the peasants paid for the grain with cattle and ultimately their land, enabling a totally different economic system to grow, with the Pharaohs able to charge rent to farmers, and having a large holding themselves. When Egypt was reunited, the rich and expansionist 18th Dynasty began. I wonder where the wealth came from?

Bibliography for OT Studies

The Bible Any modern English translation (or the authorised version, it is still the most scholarly translation).

Who wrote the Bible? Friedman ISBN 0-224-02573-2

Civilisations of the Holy Land Paul Johnson 1979

Report on **Axes Bold as Love: Imported Neolithic Axe-Heads in Britain**

by *Dr Katharine Walker FSA*

This lecture was given on Zoom, and Katharine explained that the title refers to an album by Jimi Hendrix, *Axis Bold as Love*, which she listened to while writing her PhD thesis. Polished stone axes, the focus of Katharine's study have been seen as significant artefacts since the time they were first made: in the raw materials used, in their forms and their uses, and how they were deposited. Many axes came into Britain originally as part of the process of 'Neolithization', between 4000 and 2400bc, but they have also been imported over the years since that time. The origins of individual pieces differ and identifying them took a great deal of work: some were brought in as ethnographic examples; there are fakes and forgeries or replicas from recent times; and others came in through collectors' networks.

Katharine's sources include museum collections in Britain and Europe, especially France; catalogues of imported axes held in local authority Historic Environment Records (HERS) in Britain; records of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS); a search of regional archaeological journals; and a comprehensive archive *Stone Axes in Britain* (compiled by Mike Pitt for his PhD), held at the National Monuments Record (NMR), Swindon. She identified four main types for her study: polished Alpine jade axes; Breton axes made in fibrolite and dolerite; flint axes from Denmark, often with natural layers exposed as 'bullseyes'; and Scandinavian types with square section butt ends, which have been widely collected. It was not known which were brought over in prehistory, or whether they may have been collected during travels etc.

Jade Axes (most common – 119 examples): sourced from quarries on Monte Viso and Monte Beigua in the Italian Alps, published by Pierre Pétrequin et al (2013), which makes it possible to identify when they were made. It is thought these mostly arrived in the early Neolithic period, but one was found in a late Mesolithic context at Vauxhall, a crossing point of the Thames. The axes are widely spread across Britain, but no more than two are found together: the mode of deposition is often a watery context, flood plains and marginal areas, sometimes in burials. One was found near the Sweet Track (early Neolithic wood causeway on Somerset Levels); in Scotland, at Carnholly chambered tomb; stray finds such as the Thames at Staines, Surrey; Snettisham, Norfolk; and at Hambledon Hill, Dorset near to chalklands. None have been reported from woodland, or in areas of local flint mining.



Polished Jadeite axe-head found near the Sweet Track (3806bc). K Walker

Breton axes (less common): the quarry source is identified as Sélédin near Plussulien, where debitage is still visible. Only a handful have been found in Britain: one example in Southampton, and others in Bournemouth, Isle of Wight, Somerset and Shrewsbury. They were discovered during field walking, in Bournemouth on a bank of earth, and the Isle of Wight example was found by a beach comber/metal detectorist.

Polished flint: Often referred to as 'Cruswell-Smerrick' type. The best quality axe-heads were found in Scotland (four) which may have originated from Denmark, but experts do not agree on this so it's not conclusive. They are distinguished from flint found in Britain, where different types of flint occur in three main areas: northern (grey centre); southern province (brown shades); and the transitional province where the flint contains black elements (used at a later stage for gunflints).

Scandinavian: These are identified by their superior quality, flatter in form with a squared base. They are fairly easy to date, c 4200bc from Denmark, and between 2900 and 2400bc from northern Netherlands. In later examples the bases are squarer. The British Museum has a collection of 1000s - the earliest found in Britain in 1872 by John Evans; Sir Mortimer Wheeler showed some in 1925; and later examples. But Charles Burkitt warned of fakes and forgeries among museum collections, and that find spots claimed to be from England would need to be checked (also mentioned by Mike Pitt). One man was jailed for forgery but later he openly produced axe-heads (signed 'Flint Jack'), which became very saleable. Katharine looked at imported Scandinavian axe-heads in Durham, Hartlepool and Orpington, sometimes associated with pottery, but she considers their origins are questionable (possibly from Belgium). A few examples have been recovered from the North Sea (Doggerland) in significant places such as tidal islands – a Skipton trawlerman found one on Dogger Bank and early Neolithic flints were found on Brown Bank - which could have been deliberate deposits in prehistory.



'Scandinavian' flint axe-head, label 'Yorkshire'. From book cover: **Axe Heads and Identity** by K Walker.

For her research sample, Katharine discounted any Scandinavian axe-heads which had definitely been brought to Britain in recent years, leaving 48 examples, often found in rivers and in small caches during field walking. The axe-heads located in British museums do not resemble those from Denmark museums. British-made equivalent axe-heads appear to be working tools, more crudely made, generally smaller and scarred, whereas imported ones are highly polished, ceremonial types. Some larger types found in the Netherlands (up to 15cm) were possibly made in Denmark and imported; while locally made examples from the Netherlands are smaller, using flint material which may have originated in Denmark and had been redeposited by glaciation.

A case study: 1937 excavation of Julliberrie's Grave long barrow on a private estate in Chilham, Kent, during an unsettled period before the outbreak of World War II. The find of a broken Neolithic Danish-type axe-head was widely reported, but following its discovery the excavation was abruptly closed, claiming that "the monument was proved to be Neolithic after discovery of the axe-head". The finds were held by Canterbury Museum and Sir Edmund Davies (the landowner), but the axe-head is missing, although a report and drawing of the item is included in the archive. Subsequently this was used to verify other examples as it was found in sealed archaeology: but Katharine speculated it may have been a hoax, planted towards the end of the excavation. It was said to be associated with a dagger, which was later dated to 1900bc!

In conclusion, Katharine considers that Alpine Jade and Breton axe-heads were imported into Britain as 'sacred objects', and deposited in significant places. Most of these axe-heads came in during the process of Neolithization, while those of Danish and Scandinavian origin may have originally entered along the east coast of Britain. These imported axe-heads are still highly prized as symbolic objects, and they are most useful items of material culture for interpreting and understanding prehistoric societies.

Sarah Hanna

A lesson from the Past

by John Langran

As a schoolboy in the 1960s I volunteered on archaeological excavations carried out during Basingstoke's redevelopment. One major site was a Romano British settlement at Oakridge, Basingstoke. The work was progressed within an active building site and became famous for a deep well, which revealed a host of finds including the remains of nine human beings, as well as the grave of a Romano British woman. Indeed, I fondly recall floating at least one of the skulls in a bowl of dirty water to 'clean' it! However, if we come forward more than half a century I find that not everything on that site was Romano-British, and that another skull found on a builder's spoil heap was Saxon. Her remains reveal another story. See below:

Source: "Summary justice or the King's will? The first case of formal facial mutilation from Anglo-Saxon England". *Antiquity* Vol 94, Issue 377 **October 2020**; Cambridge University Press (available freely online).



The authors present the earliest archaeological evidence for intentional facial mutilation from Anglo-Saxon England—comprising the removal of the nose, upper lip and possible scalping—inflicted upon a young adult female. The injuries are consistent with documented punishments for female offenders.

Partial view of maxilla (palette) showing facial mutilation.

This macabre story got me wondering. Firstly, this might have been one of my 'floating' skulls! Secondly and more importantly, a find made more than half a century ago has been re-assessed and revealed its story. We will hope to reconvene the Archaeology Unit's Finds group after Covid and go back on quiet weeks to sorting and recording finds excavated in Hamwic in the 1970s. We should remember that those dusty boxes may yet have a story to tell.

PS The age of this skull was revealed by advances in dating techniques made since the 1960s, particularly by carbon¹⁴ calibration; this also features in our March 2021 lecture when Dr Dawn Cansfield will talk about reassessment of human remains from the Neolithic and later prehistory, which were first unearthed in the early 20th century (Ed).

Southampton Archaeology Society lecture programme 2020/21

There have been some changes to this year's programme to accommodate speakers' preferences, but by September we hope to hold open lectures again (probably socially distanced). St Joseph's Hall has been provisionally booked on the second Tuesday each month for the 2021/22 programme, though we may continue holding occasional winter lectures on Zoom. Email invitations to the Zoom meetings will be sent to all current SAS members during the week before the lecture.

***February 9** – 7.15pm, on Zoom. **The People and Economy of Old Sarum 1070–1500: new discoveries in old manuscripts** by June Effemey, Swansea University.

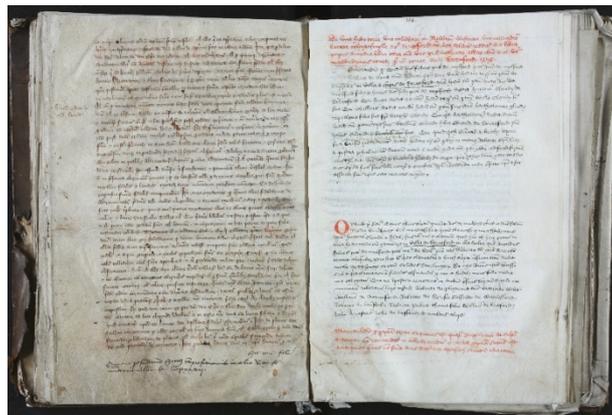
March 9 – 7.15pm, on Zoom. **Ancient Dead in Hampshire & beyond** by Dr Dawn Cansfield, Visiting ECR Fellow at the University of Winchester.

April 13 – 7.15pm, on Zoom. **Bronze Age Monument near Beaulieu** (title to be confirmed) by Hilde van der Heul, Community Archaeologist, New Forest National Park Authority.

May 11 – 7.15pm, on Zoom. **SAS Annual General Meetings 2020 and 2021**, followed by an update on the recent work of Southampton Archaeology Unit by Dr Andy Russel.

***Next Lecture:** Tuesday 9th February on Zoom from 7.00pm, lecture starts 7.15pm. The speaker will be SAS member June Effemey, a PhD student at Swansea University, who will talk about **The People and Economy of Old Sarum 1070–1500: new discoveries in old manuscripts.**

A year ago June made headlines in the national press, with her discovery of a set of hitherto unknown medieval deeds describing the landscape and people of Old Sarum in the late 13th century. This has enabled partial reconstruction of the layout of Old Sarum, its economy and its inhabitants in more detail than had previously been possible, and brought the now deserted medieval borough back to life. The talk will include the chronology of Old Sarum, how it survived until the late 15th century, and about its late 13th and 14th century hub for the sale of wool, involving Italian merchants. Documentary evidence will be linked with archaeological discoveries made by Southampton University.



Report on Consultations for Southampton City of Culture 2025

Southampton Archaeology Society has been represented in initial consultations for the City Council's bid for Southampton City of Culture 2025, and at a recent community consultation for the Shirley Ward. It is reported that the meetings were rather formulaic in character and the Heritage sector response was fragmented; while the bidding process nationally may be subject to delay due to Covid restrictions. This initiative has however prompted some great ideas for the promotion of Southampton's heritage – please see the **Friends of Hamwic** notice on the next page.

Website contact: southamptonarchaeology@gmail.com

Facebook group: Southampton Archaeology Society

Our lectures normally take place in St. Joseph's Hall, Bugle Street SO14 2AH on the 2nd Tuesday of each month; but due to COVID-19 restrictions we shall be hosting the lectures on Zoom, from 7.00pm. Talks are free to paid-up SAS members, who will receive email invitations in advance.

2019-2020 SAS Committee

Chair – Sarah Hanna
Vice-Chair – Martyn Dowell
Hon Treasurer – John Langran
Hon Secretary – Mandy Kesby
General Committee Members – Rowan Bright, Chris Evans, Karen Wardley and Matt Garner. Archaeological Advisor: Dr Andy Russel. Co-opted: Sue Davies.

Subscription Rates 2020/21

Individuals	£10.00
Senior Citizens	£8.00
Juniors/Students	£8.00
Family	£14.00

If you or a friend wish to join SAS (or to renew your subscription) please ask the Hon Treasurer to send you an application form, or visit our website to print off a copy.

Contact us

www.southamptonarchaeology.uk

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We would love to receive contributions to the Newsletter – by email to sarahvhanna@hotmail.com, or by post to Sarah Hanna, 346 Hill Lane SO15 7PH. We reserve the right to edit as necessary.

This notice is published at the request of Jack Wilson one of the team at See Southampton, and we hope that Southampton Archaeology Society members will wish to support the aims of this group. It's one of three groups initiated by See Southampton recently: the others are *Friends of Southampton's Docks & Liners*, and *Friends of Southampton's Walls & Vaults*.

Since there are no remains of the Saxon settlement above ground, the main purpose of the *Friends of Hamwic* group would be to promote knowledge of the settlement of Hamwic, and its importance in Hampshire and to the early history of Southampton. We'll bring you updates on the progress of the group and its aims from time to time.

Friends of Hamwic

The Group was formed in 2020 after a discussion with Matt Garner, who worked for many years at Southampton Archaeology Unit. A few years ago, Matt led some walks around the Middle Saxon (7th to 9th centuries) town of Hamwic, organised by See Southampton, explaining the various digs that have taken place and their findings.

We wish to:

1. Promote the history of Hamwic in any way possible.
2. Promote a free exhibition, preferably somewhere in the Hamwic (St Mary's) area.
3. Promote walks and talks about Hamwic, organised through See Southampton Guides.
4. Encourage information boards, plaques and murals in the area.
5. Promote the renovation of the Saxon Column (by Rachel Fenner) at the south end of St Mary Street.
6. Either set up a Hamwic Facebook page, or post regularly on the See Southampton Facebook page, about Hamwic and the Group's activities.
7. Set up a website, similar to the format of the exhibition, though this will depend on gaining sponsors.
8. Promote a new popular publication about Hamwic, though this will also depend on gaining sponsors / grants.

We have formed under the banner of See Southampton, but the Friends of Hamwic Group is open to anyone with an interest in Hamwic. There is no commitment to money, or to time, unless you wish. The fact that Southampton is bidding in early 2021 to become the City of Culture in 2025 has been a spur to get us started, but we will continue regardless of the success of that bid.

If you would like to be involved, please contact Jack Wilson at jack@seesouthampton.co.uk, or on See Southampton's telephone number 07770 842728.