

Southampton Archaeology Society

July 2017 Newsletter



Dear Members

The last three months have been busy for Southampton Archaeology Society, following the final lecture of our 2016/17 programme in April, when Matt Garner told us about the three-year excavation project at Quarr Abbey, Isle of Wight. At the AGM in May members agreed on a small rise in subscriptions from May 2018, and we also enjoyed a lively presentation from leaders of Southampton Young Archaeologists' Club about their work and adventures with young people.

The highlight of the year was our Study Day on 10th June when we had a capacity audience at St Joseph's Hall to hear how excavations over the past eighty years have revealed Southampton's past secrets. Speakers included Phil Andrews, Alan Morton, Andy Russel, Duncan Brown, Matt Garner, Mike Smith and Jana Ewart Blake, with contributions from Joan and Brian Webb, almost all of them former members of the Southampton Archaeology Unit, and it was great to see the archaeologists enjoying the chance to meet and talk over old times. Feedback from the day was very positive, and we look forward to future study days or day schools. Matt Garner led another walking tour of St Mary's at the end of June, when he told the story of excavations in Hamwic (see below).

This summer promises lots of activity, with the CBA Festival of Archaeology starting on 15th July, and some local events are featured in later pages. There are two current exhibitions in Southampton on the subject of castles: Southampton Castle at Tudor House Museum and Garden; and at Southampton Art Gallery is a major art show *Capture the Castle* with both earlier romantic and modern interpretations of the theme - not to be missed. Southampton and Winchester are both celebrating their connections with Jane Austen for the 200th anniversary of her death, on 17th July 1817 in Winchester. Jane briefly attended school in Southampton and lived in the city between 1806 and 1809: there will be walks, talks, concerts, a literary weekend and even a Ball, continuing until October!

Sarah

A Walking Tour of Hamwic with Matt Garner



For our early summer outing this year Matt Garner led a walking tour in St Mary's, featuring sites from the middle Saxon trading port of Hamwic. This is a heavily developed area and nothing remains of the town above ground as the houses were built of wattle and daub with rush thatch for the roof, and our information about the people and their lives depends on finds from numerous excavations which have taken place over the past eighty years. Increasing evidence for the area covered by the town has been revealed and it's currently estimated at fifty *ha*, from the Saxon Chapel Road near the Itchen shore west towards Hoglands Park, which crosses Saxon St Mary Street, north-south from Chantry to Six Dials. Most evidence has been recovered from pits (both domestic and industrial rubbish) and cemeteries, randomly placed around the work and living areas.

The column on the left features a design from a bone plaque found in Hamwic: it was made by Rachel Fenner and erected in 1990 as a symbol for the area, and funding is being sought to have it cleaned.

This image (right) shows part of the Cook Street excavation (SOU 254) with a penannular ring-ditch enclosing a central burial surrounded by secondary burials; beyond the fence is a block of flats with St Mary's church spire visible above. Areas of dark earth may indicate industrial activity such as smelting or pits where brickearth was dug for house building, and it shows the typical range of features found in many Hamwic sites. Industries included metalworking in bronze, iron and also gold; bone and antler working for bone combs; spinning, weaving and leather work; handmade pottery and glass working, mainly using 'cullet' (recycled glass). Large amounts of animal bones were probably from food waste: they included cattle, pigs, sheep and goats.



The walk took place in rather cool and damp conditions, an ideal atmosphere to imagine how it might have appeared over 1200 years ago – the main streets follow the Saxon town 'plan' and we made frequent stops to hear about different excavations, keeping our eyes on the ground to avoid the mud, while people hurried past going about their business, as they would have done in Hamwic. Our route took in St Mary's churchyard and up to Six Dials, round to Old Northam Road with its antique and craft shops, to the new stadium where more cemeteries have revealed yet more spectacular finds. The best Hamwic finds are housed in SeaCity Museum (Gateway to the World), but the Archaeology Store at 18 Melbourne Street contains a wealth of beautiful items which Matt showed to the party – from metal and bone pins, fine glass fragments, spinning whorls, bone combs and fragments of cut bone or antler from which they were made – to more mundane items such as pottery sherds and burned daub showing the impressions of the wattle frames of buildings. We were all fascinated by the stories and finds from Hamwic, and many thanks to Matt for such an interesting tour.

Sarah Hanna

Crumbling Stone by Jo Willoughby

Thin slivers, saxon glass

Saturday night

Nobody wants you

When you're out of context

Black smudge, green smudge, yellow smudge

A cesspit seems to turn the earth green

Brick earth

Earth to make bricks

We're looking for dark circles

Pits

An air raid shelter and a lift shaft
Student accommodation and ALDI
A Fox
A Glove
This nanny state
The bottom failing on a Bakelite ink well
A Dinosaur, the machine chomps
chomps the skin from the building
“We destroy the past in pursuit of knowledge”
Layers dug away, the guts
Fill in holes with the same crushed concrete
And that Victorian rubbish
A toothbrush, nailbrush
But I keep the dirt under my nails
All week

This is part of a longer poem written by Jo Willoughby, who joined our archaeology finds processing group a few months ago. The group meets on Monday nights at the Southampton Archaeology Unit under Andy Russel’s leadership, and we wash, sort and mark finds from sites excavated by the Unit, sometimes from very old sites, especially Hamwic (Saxon). Jo’s poem highlights the sort of topics that might come up in discussions, and I hope readers will find this intriguing. We meet from ~7.30 to 9.00 each Monday at 18, Melbourne Street SO14 5FB. Please contact Andy (andy.russel@southampton.gov.uk) or on 023 8083 2022 if you’d be interested in joining the group.

Review: *We Die Like Brothers* by John Gribble and Graham Scott

This is a moving and graphic account of the tragic story of the SS Mendi, which sank off the Isle of Wight in the early hours of 17th February 1917 and over 600 men were drowned. They were mainly members of the South African Native Labour Corps (SANLC) en route to the battlefields of France to support the British and allied troops, whose story has been little known until now. John Gribble is a native of South Africa who researched the background and unfolding of events in meticulous detail, while Graham Scott who was born in Liverpool has brought his knowledge of that city’s maritime history to uncover the story of the ship, and the collision which sank her, the finding of the wreck and her present condition.

It is well known that as WWI became a prolonged war of attrition over the fields of northern France, Britain turned to her Dominions for support in providing fighting forces; but it’s less well documented that men from the African colonies, also Egyptian and Chinese troops were recruited as ‘native labour’ to work behind the lines. In 1916 it was agreed with the South African (SA) white government that they would supply labour, but the SA authorities were already operating apartheid and were concerned that black

soldiers should not be involved in fighting directly against white enemies, for fear of creating racial unrest when they returned home. Furthermore the SA government insisted that their nationals should be totally segregated from contact with those from other countries, and kept in 'closed compounds' on the pattern of those used by the SA gold and diamond mining companies for their labourers.

Meanwhile African leaders in SA felt that the use of native troops to support the British war effort could be useful later on their return home to argue for greater political autonomy for black SA subjects, so they encouraged recruitment among the tribal and community leaders. It proved difficult to fulfil the quotas although around 21000 individuals enlisted, and it was 802 men of the 5th SANLC battalion who embarked on the SS Mendi, a steam cargo vessel converted as a troopship. She had almost reached her destination port of Le Havre when fog descended at night while the ship was steaming carefully up the Channel close to the shore, when she was rammed amidships by Royal Mail steamship Darro, travelling at speed in the fog with scant consideration for other traffic. Most of the men were below decks and many probably perished as water rushed into the holds, while as the Mendi began to sink it became impossible to release the port side lifeboats. The remaining lifeboats were not adequate to take all who needed rescue, and many men had to jump into the sea with no means of support except the possibility of staying afloat long enough to reach one of the life rafts which they might be able to hold on to: but with their heavy overcoats and flimsy life-jackets in the freezing temperatures, many more perished in the water.

Following the disaster many African families remained unaware of the fate of their men for several months, and recruitment was ended later in 1917 due to unrest among the troops. Those who survived and returned home received no acknowledgement by the SA authorities of their contribution to the victory, unlike the white SA troops who each received a medal. Memorials in Southampton (Holybrook Cemetery, Shirley, listing all those lost on SS Mendi) and Portsmouth were set up, but it was not until 1995 that a memorial to the men of SANLC was unveiled in Soweto, Johannesburg. Their story is told by Gribble and Scott with a passion and attention to detail which engages the reader and inspires the desire for justice. The book is hardback and well illustrated, published by Historic England at the price of £17.99. It is now available from Southampton City Library so you may borrow it yourselves.

Sarah Hanna

Forthcoming Events

The CBA Festival of Archaeology runs from Saturday 15th July to Sunday 30th July 2017. Here is a selection of events taking place locally, see www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk for details of these and all Festival events.

Hampshire Saturday 15th July 10.00am - 4.30pm **Southampton Archaeovillage Activity Day** at University of Southampton Avenue Campus, Highfield Road SO17 1BF. Opportunities to explore a range of activities based on current research in the Dept of Archaeology: hands-on objects, demonstrations of ancient technology and exhibitions – come and experience something new! Free event, no need to book.

Friday 21st to Friday 28th July 10.30am – 4.30pm daily. **Mary Rose Museum Archaeology Week** at Mary Rose Museum, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, HM Naval Base Portsmouth PO1 3PY. Programme of daily activities, please see www.maryrose.org/archaeologyweek2017 for details. Activities free with valid entry ticket, no need to book.

Sunday 23rd July 10.30am – 4.30pm. **Portsmouth Museum Lost in Time: life in a 17th century village** at Portsmouth Museum, Museum Road, PO1 2LJ. Travel back in time to 1642 and meet residents of Little Woodham – re-enacted by members of Gosport Living History Society – and find out what life was like just before the English Civil War. Free to attend, no need to book.

Friday 28th July 10.00am – 5.00pm. **Try It! Day, Butser Ancient Farm**, Chalton Lane, Waterlooville, Hants PO8 0BG. Experimental archaeology suitable for all ages: metalworking, ancient textiles, hypocaust

demonstrations, cave painting as well as farm animals, crafts, cooking etc! Tickets £8/£7 (concs), £4 child, free for U5s. No need to book.

West Sussex Tuesday 25th to Friday 4th August 11.00am – 4.00pm. **“Have a go at Archaeology”** – excavating at Fishbourne Roman Palace, Salthill Road, Chichester PO19 3QR. A regular Festival event which offers visitors to the Palace the chance to experience archaeological excavation, with experts who can tell you about what you might find. Free, but donations welcome (suggest £1pp), no need to book.

Wiltshire Saturday 22nd to Sunday 23rd July 10.00am – 5.00pm. **Salisbury Museum’s very own Festival of Archaeology** Salisbury Museum, The King’s House, 65 The Close, Salisbury SP1 2EN. Wide range of activities on the programme (visit www.salisburymuseum.org.uk for details), with talks, displays, presentations and a live dig with Phil Harding. Entry by £2 donation; talks £8 (pre-booking required).

Saturday 22nd to Sunday 23rd July 11.00am – 5.00pm. **Old Sarum Archaeology Weekend** at Old Sarum, Salisbury SP1 3SD. Explore the world of archaeology for the weekend and find out more about Wiltshire’s past. Admission prices apply (see www.english-heritage.org.uk) but no need to book.

Monday 24th July to Thursday 31st August 11.00am – 5.00pm daily. **Old Sarum Hands on History**, venue and admission as above. Activities throughout the summer holidays with the English Heritage ‘hands on history crew’ bringing the past to life. No need to book.

Exhibitions: Southampton City Art Gallery until 2nd September 2017 - *Capture the Castle*, the first large-scale art exhibition on the subject of British castles. Southampton City Art Gallery, Civic Centre SO14 7LY, open 10.00am to 3.00pm Monday – Friday, 10.00am to 5.00pm Saturday (closed Sunday). Free entry, £3 donation suggested.

Tudor House & Garden until further notice - *Southampton Castle: A Ceremony in Stone*. The exhibition explores the castle’s history through archaeology, documents and surviving stone structures. Tudor House and Garden, Bugle Street SO14 2AD, open 10.00am to 3.00pm Monday – Thursday, 10.00am to 5.00pm weekends (closed Friday). For admission prices visit tudorhouseandgarden.com.

Friday 11th August SeaCity Museum Havelock Road SO14 7FY 2.00 to 3.00pm. *The Conspiracy of Titanic*, a talk by Andy Skinner, historian and SeaCity Learning Officer, who will explore conspiracy theories concerning the sinking of RMS Titanic. Cost £5/£4 concs (not incl museum entry). Pre-book on 80834536.

Saturday 9th September 10.00am to 5.00pm. **Southampton Heritage Fayre** at St Joseph’s Hall, Bugle Street SO14 2AH. Held to coincide with national Heritage Open Days 8th – 11th September

Sunday 10th September 10.30am to 4.30pm. **Tudor House Open Day**, free entry: activities include tours and crafts; Courtlye Musick playing Renaissance tunes, while the Vintage Bus service offers four free guided tours of Southampton Old Town (charges may apply for extra activities). TH&G details as above.

Thursday 14th September 7.30 to 8.30pm Westgate Hall Talk on *Mariners in the Eighteenth Century* by Maria Newbury, SCC Curator of Maritime and Local Collections. Westgate Hall, Westgate Street SO14 2AY. Cost £5/£4 (FoSMAG, SAS etc). Pre- book on 80834536.

Saturday 30th September 10.00am to 5.00pm **Jane Austen Festival** at Tudor House and Garden, free entry with drop-in talks and activities in the Georgian Room. Talks last 30 minutes, first come, first served. See website for further details www.janeausten200.co.uk. TH&G details as above.

See www.sarahsiddonsfanclub.org for full details of **Southampton & Netley Jane Austen 200 Festivals June to October 2017**.

Southampton Archaeology Society News

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank our members for their support, and particularly to those who help with the lecture programme, for instance Penny Rudkin who arranges for posters to be sent to the City Libraries before the meetings, and also makes coffee and tea each time. Other members often help with putting out chairs, bringing equipment and with clearing the hall and washing up at the end of meetings. We're most grateful for your contributions, which help to make the meetings a good social occasion.

Next Lecture: September 12th 2017 7.30pm. **Gill Woolrich** 'Southampton Castle'. The history of Southampton Castle, using documentary, architectural and archaeological evidence, expanding on the current exhibition at Tudor House. Hear tales of kings, pirates, fly-tippers and other ne'er-do-wells, and a short introduction to medieval toilets.

Our 2017 - 2018 lecture series begins in September. Details from Anna Welch, tel 0781 285 1095, or email archaeoanna@yahoo.co.uk. Lectures are free to members and £2 per visitor - bring your friends! We meet at St. Joseph's Hall, Bugle Street SO14 2AH, starting 7.30pm (and generally finish by 9.00pm). Tea and coffee is served from 7.00pm. Please join us after the talks in The Duke of Wellington pub in Lower Bugle Street.

Our new **Graffiti Survey Group** has started on a survey of graffiti in the attics and cellars at Tudor House Museum, led by Karen Wardley. Our next meeting is on Wednesday 2nd August, 10.30am, meeting in the café if you'd like to come. Contact sarahvhanna@hotmail.com to find out more.

Facebook users may use this link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/748138972007328/> to access the SAS Facebook group – sign up to Facebook if you'd like to join in too.

Lectures are free to members and £2 per visitor. Please bring your friends! All lectures will take place in St. Joseph's Hall, Bugle Street, Southampton SO14 2AH, unless otherwise stated, from 7.30pm to 9.00pm. Tea and coffee is served from 7.00pm. Please join us at the Duke of Wellington pub after the meeting.

2017-2018 SAS Committee

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

Subscription Rates

Individuals	£9.00
Senior Citizens	£7.00
Juniors/Students	£7.00
Family	£12.00

If you or a friend would like to join (or if you haven't yet renewed your subscription) please send your details to John Langran, with a cheque for the appropriate amount, payable to Southampton Archaeology Society – or you can pay at the next lecture.

Contact us

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We would be very glad to receive contributions to the Newsletter – by e-mail or post (it doesn't have to be typed). Whilst we will endeavour to print articles in their entirety, we reserve the right to edit as necessary.