

Southampton Archaeology Society

November 2016 Newsletter



Dear Members

We're now well into our autumn lecture programme, having made a great start with Dr Andy Russel's talk on Chantry Hall, excavated in 2014 by Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit. This included some interesting observations on the Chantry Hall itself, a performance venue from the early 20th century which burnt down in the 1990s, but retained many original features which were surveyed by the Unit before

demolition. The excavation uncovered evidence of activity from prehistoric and medieval times, although the main discoveries were from the Tudor period.

Our October lecture from Dr James Cole led us into the puzzle of Simila, a Palaeolithic site in Tanzania which has produced very large handaxes (over 300mm) as well as numerous others of regular sizes, but where dating is a particular problem. It was fascinating to hear about the analysis of stratigraphy and many theories put forward to try to resolve the issue, and we'd love to hear more of this work in future.

During September several members took part in a Society outing to visit the excavations at Quarr Abbey, near Ryde; I was lucky enough to dig there with members of the IOW Natural History and Archaeology Society for the last few days of the project (results will be revealed by Matt Garner in April next year).

Included with this newsletter is the latest list of site reports in Southampton from the Historic Environment Team, and thanks to Ingrid Peckham for compiling this for our members. Thanks also to John Langran for writing about his experience of digging at Bucklers Hard on the Beaulieu estate during the Festival of Archaeology, and to Martyn Dowell who brings us up to date with his thoughts on Stonehenge. A notice from Wessex CBA is attached (email only) about their conference and AGM, to be held at Basingstoke on Saturday 5th November, and some SAS members may wish to receive their monthly newsletter by email, as the society is affiliated to Wessex CBA. Please let me know if you're interested.

The hand-out for our Christmas event on 12th December is included, and copies will be available at our lecture meeting next week on Tuesday 8th November: 7.30pm at St Joseph's Hall, Bugle Street SO14 2AH. The speaker will be Jane Ellis-Schön of Salisbury Museum, on 'Finding Pitt Rivers' in the museum's archive. We look forward to seeing you there.

Best wishes

Sarah

Festival of British Archaeology - Bucklers Hard 2016

by John Langran

Bucklers Hard near Beaulieu in the New Forest has one of the most beautiful settings in Southern England. This year I had the opportunity to take part in an archaeological dig there. The Beaulieu Estate gave permission during the Festival of British Archaeology 2016. It was undertaken by volunteers under the supervision of the New Forest National Park Authority Archaeologists. I joined about forty others who agreed to do at least two days' work during a glorious week in July.

The aim was to clarify the extent of any archaeological remains, focusing on three buildings identified on historic maps at the eastern edge of the shipyard. Their faint platforms were still visible (see map on page 2). Training was also provided to volunteers in excavation and survey.

Bucklers Hard and Shipbuilding

Many ships were built at the Hard during the late 18th and early 19th centuries including some which fought at the Battle of Trafalgar. However, the industry declined in the 19th century. During World War II, it was used to service motor torpedo boats, and the river was a base for landing craft for the Normandy invasion.



The Dig

The setting was a forested area to the east of the main Hard. I joined for the first and penultimate days. It was believed that two of the platforms potentially comprised the remains of the forge and the timber store respectively. The forge was of particular interest as analysis of its remains could have rendered information about activity on the site. The trenches had been marked out prior to commencement and I was allocated to the “timber store” area. Its long narrow platform was very clearly visible at ground level. On the first day started the process of clearing away the top layers of soil. Conditions were very warm and it was fortunate that we were working in shade. My trowel didn't reveal much except a small piece of Verwood pottery and some tile. We also regularly had to pause to answer questions from curious and intrigued visitors to the Hard.

When I returned five days later the trench was nearing completion and we set about the business of recording. It had not been particularly rich in finds except roof tile - of course, a timber store may not leave much in the way of “hard” remains. Work on the “forge” had ceased because of the presence of petrochemicals. The preliminary conclusion was that it had been used during WWII to house a generator or similar installation. (The Hard still has many WWII remains and it was known this period had damaged other earlier structures.) Overall, the three trenches revealed a site much disturbed by later activity although they seem to support the original hypotheses. It will be interesting to know what the archaeologists conclude after their analysis. They are going back to address the unanswered questions in November now the petrochemical fug has cleared. I intend to join them.

It was a hugely enjoyable experience especially as we were “paid” at the end of each day with a New Forest ice cream! However, the satisfaction derived from digging, the learning and the fellowship was a greater reward.

CBA Festival of Archaeology 2016

According to the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) this year's Festival was the 'highest-profile' celebration so far, with more events taking place and attracting more visitors than before (*CBA Newsletter 38, October 16 to January 17*). There were certainly a lot of events in Hampshire, Wiltshire and West Sussex, with opportunities to take part such as John's experience at Buckler's Hard; and during the Festival's first weekend I tried to visit a few in our local area.

First on Friday 22nd July I took my bike on the ferry from Lymington to Yarmouth, Isle of Wight and cycled over to Highdown below Tennyson Down. A steep climb led us to where the National Trust, Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA), and the CITiZAN project were excavating a prehistoric enclosure near the Tennyson Monument, part of which had been lost to erosion at the cliff edge. The site is possibly Bronze age though little dating evidence had come to light. The dig was led by Alex Bellisario of MOLA, and we hope to invite her or colleague Lauren Tidbury to give us a talk next year.

Above: Tennyson Down Project: excavation of bank of prehistoric enclosure, July 2016.

Left: close-up of section. Photos: S Hanna



Next morning I dropped in at the **Archaeovillage** hosted by the University of Southampton Archaeology Dept on the Avenue Campus where there was lots of activity going on at 9.30am. Displays included a wonderful display of shipbuilding tools belonging to Professor Jon Adams of the Maritime Archaeology Centre; while a family of visiting children were learning the hard way how to polish Neolithic flint axes.



Above: Shipwright's tools collected by Jon Adams.

Below: Trying out the art of stone axe polishing.

Photos: S Hanna



Later I drove to Salisbury where Salisbury Museum were holding their own **Showground of Archaeology** all weekend, with many displays and activities within the Museum and its grounds. I enjoyed an art exhibition of colourful prints by a local artist in the museum, as by then it was very hot and sultry and also crowded. It was wonderful to see so many families visiting with children getting involved by dressing up, making swords and shields and digging for finds in the sandpit! Some of the craft displays were very detailed and professional, for instance the Ancient Wessex Network with wickerwork shields, flintwork, hafted stone axes, leatherwork and even a replica tent, all based on excavated examples.



At Salisbury I caught up with Anna Welch on the display of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, where she was on duty all the weekend, and other members of SAS also came to this event. There were more events I wanted to see but some took place on days which clashed with other visits, while others were just too far to manage this time. The Festival is a great showcase for archaeology and everyone can take part!

Sarah Hanna

The Stonehenge 'Problem'

Earlier in the year, Rescue News published an article by Brian Edwards, the excavator of the important and recently discovered site of Blick Mead, the Mesolithic site adjacent to the A303 not far from Stonehenge. It was refreshing to hear some common sense on the proposals to upgrade that road. He highlights the considerable damage a tunnel - of any length - would cause in excavating its portals, not to mention the temporary damage caused by the huge works yards necessary to deal with the spoil. Surely this idea, with its high cost, cannot be the best solution. Further, with the Brexit decision having been made, a rethink on costs will probably have to take place - again. There are however at least two other solutions.

Re-routing the road away from the World Heritage Site landscape might seem ideal, but would have high social costs in terms of villages and other settlements affected. It might also be a shot in the foot if other important archaeology, as yet undiscovered, has to be hurriedly excavated and

then destroyed. Again, extensive works yards would deface the countryside, and the cost, including land purchases, could be even higher.

I think there is only one realistic answer, which would cause the minimum of archaeological and geographical damage, and would be almost completely reversible if necessary in future centuries. This is to build a low viaduct above the existing route. Excavation would be limited to intermittent holes for supporting piers, requiring works yards of much more modest size. Of course it would still be visually intrusive, but a clear view both above and below it would enable the onlooker to visualise the outlook from Stonehenge quite easily. The whole thing need only be high enough for people and animals to pass underneath, and for meadow grass to regrow, for which light wells would be needed. This is not the cheapest solution either, but I doubt it would cost nearly as much as a tunnel.

Martyn Dowell

A selection of local events this autumn:

Exhibitions: 5th November 2016 to 2nd April 2017 *The Days – a Victorian Southampton Family* is the story of Charles Day, an East India Company official who came to Southampton in 1813 and members of his family, who became shipbuilders (Summers and Day of Northam) and include the city's first recipient of the Victoria Cross. Their story shows how 19th century Southampton developed from spa town to industrial and transport centre. Tudor House and Garden, St Michael's Square, Bugle Street SO14 2AD: open 10.00 to 3.00pm Tues to Fri, 10.00am to 5.00pm weekends (closed Mondays except Bank Holidays). Entry charges.

5th November 2016 to 8th January 2017 *Births, Battles and Beheadings*: Hampshire Cultural Trust celebrates Hampshire's royal history from the Iron Age through to Romans, Anglo-Saxons and the Tudors and Stuarts, and several items on show have never been publicly exhibited before. Among the exhibits are the Winchester Hoard, Cnut's Heart Bowl, and the chair used by Mary Tudor at her marriage in 1554 to Philip II of Spain; also the Alton Buckle, a gold, sapphire and garnet ring 700 years old recently acquired by Winchester City Council, and a rare Byzantine pail from Breamore. The exhibition will be at The Gallery, Winchester Discovery Centre, Jewry Street, SO23 8SB, and will be open from 9:00am-7:00pm Mon to Fri; 9:00am - 5:00pm Saturdays and 11:00am - 3:00pm Sundays. Free admission - donations welcome!

Friday/Saturday 11th - 12th November Lower Test Valley Archaeological Society **Anglo-Saxon Exhibition**: following their successful conference last April, the Society is holding a display of the findings made by society members through their ongoing project on the Anglo-Saxons in the lower Test valley. This will be held in the Court Room of Romsey Town Hall, 1 Market Square, Romsey SO51 8YZ. For details contact LTVAS Chair Phoebe Merrick on 01794 513751.

Saturday 12th November Bitterne Local History Society 7.00pm. Don Bryan will talk about '*The Civil War in Hampshire*'. Members £1, non-members £3. Bitterne United Reformed Church in Bitterne Precinct (next to Bitterne Churchyard).

Wednesday 16th November Hampshire Field Club (HFC) 7.30pm. O G S Crawford Lecture 2016 on '*Place-names and archaeology*', to be given by Oliver Padel and Richard Coates. Science Lecture Theatre, Peter Symonds College, Berewecke Road, Winchester SO22 6RX. Please book in advance (no cost) with Chris Sellen, Secretary, 40 Merrieleas Drive, Chandlers Ford, SO53 2FN or email to chris.sellen@ntlworld.com.

Saturday 19th November Southampton Ancient Egypt Society 2.00pm. Lecture by Tessa Baber '*The Mummy Pits of Ancient Egypt*'. 'Mummy pits', containing mass burials of huge numbers of bodies, and once a common feature of Egypt's burial landscape, have largely disappeared from the archaeological record. Descriptions of these pits occur in the accounts of early travellers and reveal their exploitation for souvenirs and for the manufacture of mummy-based products like fertilizer. Such writings provide details which allow examination of the practice and aid research into the reasons behind this type of burial, as

well as potentially locating mummy pits in the field. Members £3, non-members £6. Oasis Academy Lordshill, Romsey Road, Southampton SO16 8FA. See www.SouthamptonAncientEgyptSociety.co.uk.

Saturday 19th November HFC Archaeology Section Annual Conference and AGM, 9.50am to 4.30pm (AGM 2.00pm approx.). *'Advances in Prehistoric Wessex'*. The speakers include Ella Egberts (Bournemouth University) on The Palaeolithic of the Avon Valley; Dr Phil Harding (Wessex Archaeology) on Mesolithic of Hampshire's Eversleigh/Yateley area; Dr Henry Chapman (University of Birmingham) on Geophysics and the Stonehenge Environs; Dr Neil Wilkin (British Museum) on Bronze Age finds from Hampshire and beyond; and Dr Miles Russell (Bournemouth University) with the latest on the Durotriges Project in Dorset. HFC members £15, non-members £20 (inc tea and coffee). Please send cheques payable to HFC Archaeology Section to Chris Sellen (address above 16th Nov) with sae for paper programme and map, or supply email address for reply and documents.

Saturday/Sunday 19 - 20th November 30th Anniversary Conference celebrating 30 years of the World Heritage Site at Stonehenge and Avebury, to be held at the Corn Exchange, Devizes. To mark three decades of development, speakers will discuss the the cultural impact of the sites, the changes in knowledge and technology that have taken place and look at expected progress in the next thirty years. More details from www.stonehengeandaveburywhs.org, or phone 01225 718470.

Thursday 24th November Westgate Hall Lecture Series 7.30 to 8.30pm *'What the Romans did for Us: The Evidence from Southampton'*. Dr Andy Russel will present the archaeological evidence for Iron Age Settlement in Southampton and examine the impact of the Roman invasion of Britain on the region. Details of a new prehistoric site in the Maybush area will be revealed. Westgate Hall, Westgate Street SO14 2AY. Cost £5 (£4 to FoSMAG, SAS, A&H volunteers). Pre-book on (023) 8083 4536.

Saturday/Sunday 3rd – 4th December Christmas at Tudor House 10.00am to 5.00pm: **free** admission! Join our Victorian-costumed staff and step back in time to take part in festive fun – meet Father Christmas, make holiday crafts to take away and follow our festive mini-trail! Charges may apply for some activities.

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.

2015 - 2016 SAS Committee

Chair – Martyn Dowell
Vice-Chair – Sarah Hanna
Hon Treasurer – John Langran
Hon Secretary – Mandy Kesby
General Committee Members – Anna Welch, Terry Pook, Sylvia Horlock, Rowan Bright 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.

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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.