



# Southampton Archaeology Society

## October 2023 Newsletter

Dear members

We're well into Autumn by now with wet and windy weather to match, but this newsletter is full of news of our activities over the summer. Since July we've had two summer walks around Southampton's Old Town, visited a nationally important archaeological site, and many members took part in events for Heritage Open Days in Southampton. Thanks to Sue Davies and John Langran for their reports (respectively) on the walks and visit to the National Trust excavation at Ankerwycke.

In September our lecture programme started with a talk about the Silchester Roman bath house by Professor Mike Fulford, when he gave a detailed account of the discoveries from his own and previous work on the site, and news of some unique finds there. Thanks to Martyn Dowell and John Langran for their help with the report. Our October lecture was an inaugural address by the new President of SAS, Professor Josh Pollard on **The Origins of Avebury**, the Neolithic henge and stone circles where Josh and his team have worked for several years. Josh reported on new results and ideas about the development of the site, which may revolutionise its history: both talks attracted large audiences (standing room only in October), and several new members joined up. A summary of the talk is included below, with a longer version to follow on our website [www.southamptonarchaeology.uk](http://www.southamptonarchaeology.uk), thanks to Mandy Kesby.

The next lecture will be **Recent work in Southampton**, to be given by Dr Kris Strutt of Southampton University, specialist in landscape archaeology, surveying and geophysics. Kris is working with Southampton Archaeology Unit to record the city walls and monuments and provide fresh insights. This takes place on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November, 7.30pm at St Joseph's Hall, Bugle Street, SO14 2AH (refreshments from 7.00pm). **NB** The venue for our Christmas event on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December has been changed because St Joseph's Hall will be closing in mid-November for repairs, with no date yet set for reopening (see notice below).

Finally, please see the notice towards the end of the newsletter from James Brown, National Trust Archaeologist for London and South East Region, proposing a new initiative for monitoring scheduled monuments in and near Southampton, the New Forest and Hampshire. This is open to SAS members and other volunteers, and James invites you to contact him if you'd like to take part.

Sarah



## Southampton Archaeology Society Christmas Social 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023 7.00pm From Roman temples to Terry Pratchett, the making of the *Terry Pratchett: HisWorld* exhibition

A talk by Richard Henry, Southampton City Council Curator of Archaeology will be followed by wine and a buffet for SAS members and their guests, cost £6 pp.

To be held at **Stella Maris, St Michael's Square, Bugle Street SO14 2AH**

Booking essential: please email [southamptonarchaeology@gmail.com](mailto:southamptonarchaeology@gmail.com) or contact SAS Hon Treasurer c/o 32 Arlott Court, Southampton SO1 2RZ

## **SAS Summer Walks 2023**

SAS is grateful to Liz Gulliver for leading two walks for members in July and September linked to the theme of our **2023 Study Day: Slavery, Colonialism and Empire: a Southampton perspective**. Liz told the stories of some of Southampton's earliest residents from black and ethnic minority communities, including some residents who owned plantations abroad.



The walks followed a route from God's House Tower, Friar's Gate (*seen on the left*), Holyrood Church, the site of Southampton Castle, St Michael's Church, Tudor House, Biddlesgate, Westgate, the Medieval Wool House, St John's Church and the French Church, and part of Queen's College, Oxford (*below right*).

The featured individuals included John Geagan, son of a white plantation owner who was sent to England for his education but amassed debts of £8,000. He was imprisoned for three years in God's House Tower, waiting for the money to pay his debts to arrive from his mother in St Kitt's. Ann Newell, heiress to a plantation in the West Indies and married to Joshua Newell another plantation owner, lived in one of two houses on the site of the Juniper Berry pub in Southampton. In her will of 1813, she allocated a sum to purchase the freedom of her maid Eliza Clark, who had been a slave. References to early black residents have been found in baptism records, wills and court records. Often referred to as 'blackamoors', this term covered anyone with a dark skin from the Middle East, Spain or Africa. In 1492/3 'Black John' is recorded working on the town's West Crane, unloading cargo from ships near the Westgate. He lived 'two doors up' from the Duke of Wellington pub in Bugle Street. In 1598, there is a record of a blackamoor living with William Ghost, a mariner, in Bugle Street; whilst there are also references to 'Black Ralph' a Southampton sailor who was rumoured to be a privateer in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

John Jackson, a black soldier in the 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Foot was discovered as a deserter in Southampton in 1837, when his lieutenant visited a pub in the town walls near Biddlesgate, where Jackson was hiding. He was sent to God's House Tower but his ultimate fate is not known. Olaudah Equiano, born in Nigeria and sold into slavery aged 11, is also linked with Southampton, having been brought to England by a Virginia plantation owning family. Equiano was sold again in 1762 and sent to the Caribbean. After buying his freedom in 1764, he returned to England and Southampton and became a renowned anti-slavery writer and campaigner.



Sue Davies

## **God's House Tower**

The tower was built above the late 13<sup>th</sup> century gate at the south east corner of the town walls; formerly called the Saltmarsh Gate, it was close to the 12<sup>th</sup> century God's House Hospital and so became known by that name. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the gatehouse was extended with a three-storey tower to protect the sluice controlling the flow of water to the external town ditch. It had eight gunports and rooftop firing points, with a gallery for storage of cannon, gunpowder and shot. Once the defences fell out of use in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the building was used as the town gaol, with accommodation for 'felons' and 'debtors'. By mid

19<sup>th</sup> century a new prison was built in the town, and the tower was then used for harbour storage, with a mortuary on the ground floor.



*God's House Tower, Town Quay Road looking west from the Platform.  
Credit: Wikimedia Commons*

The building was converted for use as Southampton's **Museum of Archaeology** in 1961, with three main galleries telling the story of Southampton in Roman, Saxon and Medieval times. The museum remained open to the public for over 50 years until **SeaCity Museum** opened in 2011, when the archaeological exhibits were transferred there for display in the *Gateway to the World* exhibition. God's House Tower was closed for several years and reopened in 2019 as an arts and heritage venue, run by **'a space' arts**. This comprises two galleries for contemporary art and community initiatives, as well as important paintings from south coast collections. A permanent display (extra charge) tells the *Stories Behind the Stones* about the Tower's history, with access to the roof, and there's a café and community facilities on the ground floor.

A regular events programme takes place at the Tower, such as musical evenings and heritage information, including *Hidden Histories Walks* held on the first Saturday each month in summer. The current exhibition **Fetissoes** is a commission by multidisciplinary artist Kialy Tihngang based in Glasgow, in partnership with Black History Month. Inspired by her British/Cameroonian heritage, Kialy reimagines and creates artefacts using memories of West African cultural practices, both as misrepresented by colonial Europeans and later romanticised. The exhibition is open until 26<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

**God's House Tower** is open all year on Friday and Saturday 10.00am to 5.00pm, and Sunday 10.00am to 4.00pm, with *GHT Lates* on alternate Friday evenings. For further information see [godshousetower.org.uk](http://godshousetower.org.uk)

*[Many thanks to Sam Goodenough at God's House Tower and to Wikipedia – Ed]*

## **Society Visit to Ankerwycke 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

Many of you will recall James Brown's Zoom lecture to us in January this year, about the 2022 excavations at Ankerwycke by the National Trust and Surrey Archaeological Society. As a result we organised a small group to visit the site in July this year in order to catch up on this year's developments.

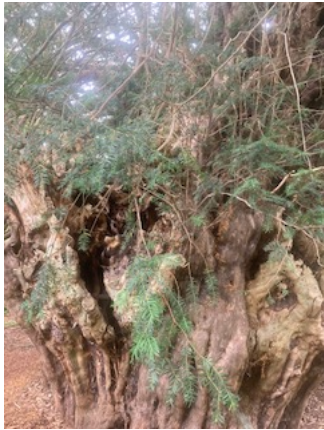
Ankerwycke is situated in a water meadow by the Thames opposite Runnymede. The site had been used by the nuns of St Marys Priory since 1160, so the nuns would have been resident at the time of signing Magna Carta in 1215. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries its site was taken over as a Tudor residence and in turn was replaced by a Georgian mansion situated elsewhere on the site, until demolition in 1990s.



*The L-shaped structure undergoing conservation and investigation. J Langran*  
What remained above ground from the Tudor era was a small L-shaped fragment of upstanding chalk masonry, which adorned the estate as a romantic ruin. One objective of the excavations was to establish what might be surviving traces of the medieval nunnery – ie whether these remains were part of the original structure or a fabricated folly. Careful examination suggested that it once had a second floor, and samples confirmed that it had been part of the site's early history. Once such

features as the remains of the cloister had been identified it became clear that it could be part of the nuns' refectory and therefore at the heart of the religious complex, which had been subsequently incorporated

into the Tudor residence. One of the additional discoveries this year was to find within the L-shaped structure a set of Tudor steps constructed of brick, tile and mortar leading down into a possible cellar - an unexpected insight into the building's conversion and later use.



*The Ankerwycke Yew, which is at least 1500 years and may be 2500 years old. J Langran*

*Tudor steps to a cellar. J Langran*



Overall our visit introduced us to a complex landscape which has had many iterations between pre-Roman and modern times.

We took the opportunity to cross the Thames and explore Runnymede: the John F Kennedy memorial, the RAF Memorial, and the Jurors – a set of twelve intricately worked bronze chairs standing together on the ancient meadow at Runnymede, created to illustrate the ongoing significance of Magna Carta.

*The "select" group of visitors from Southampton Archaeology Society. L to R: Martyn Dowell, Sarah Hanna, John Nightingale and John Langran. Photo: J Brown*



For further information: **Excavating Ankerwycke – From Priory to Pleasure Ground.** Please see [Current Archaeology](#) Issue 404 November 2023.

## **Report on Presidential Lecture 10 October 2023: The Origins of Avebury** by Professor Josh Pollard, University of Southampton

*By Sarah Hanna*

The Neolithic stone circle of Avebury, near Marlborough, Wiltshire is one of the largest stone circles in the world, and forms part of the UNESCO Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site. Josh paid tribute to colleagues and predecessors for earlier work at Avebury, but he contrasted this site with Stonehenge in terms of investigations and analysis, for instance work to identify the provenance of the stones. There has been much speculation on the purpose of Avebury, and some modifications took place, including burial of a number of stones in the post-medieval period. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, excavations led by Harold St George Grey from 1908 to 1922 discovered over 40 antler picks thought to have been used to dig the 11m wide ditch, and some later human remains. Between 1937 – 39 Alexander Keiller examined the inner stone settings and reinstated several fallen stones.

How did work on the monument begin? It has been suggested that the sub-circular henge would have predated the stone settings, using locally available massive sarsens to form an outer circle, and enclosing two inner circles and their central features. This landscape contains many other monument forms: from early Neolithic Windmill Hill, to later Neolithic stone avenues and megalithic tombs such as West Kennet Long barrow, which may be contemporary with Avebury at different phases of its construction. At the time of the investigations by Alexander Keiller Avebury was thought to have been conceived 'in one go', but more recent work indicates it has evolved over a longer time frame. A suggested sequence could be: the first phase of the henge dated to the early Neolithic before 3000bc, with the outer stone circle introduced

around 2500bc, at the time of the Beaker influx. Some adjustment to the stone settings later occurred, with evidence of human burials within the ditch, but the monument was probably abandoned by 2000bc. A table illustrated the development of Neolithic monument building, from early causewayed enclosures and communal tombs under long barrows, to later mortuary monuments such as stone passage graves covered by large mounds. More complex monuments dating from 2200 - 2000bc suggested ritual and ceremonial uses, for instance at Maes Howe and the Ness of Brodgar in Orkney, and New Grange in the Boyne Valley (Ireland). Similar monuments in this time-frame include Stonehenge and Dorchester (Dorset), some of which involved transport of stones hundreds of miles. Analysis of burials at Stonehenge has found that some individuals of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium bc originated in the area of the Bluestones circle (Preselli Hills, West Wales).

#### How can we interpret Avebury in the light of other monuments?

The earthwork appears to have been constructed as a rough circle or ovoid. Excavation of the outer bank and ditch revealed an earlier smaller bank 2.5m high and ~5/6m wide, where a soil had formed before being overlaid by the larger bank, increasing the height to 5/6m, and the ditch to 11m wide. The henge was laid out with symmetry and care, which was later obscured by insertion of entrances on a trapezoidal axis. Nearby is the early Neolithic Windmill Hill which has a similar orientation, constructed in the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium bc. The monuments are inter-visible, and were possibly reworked at the same time. It was thought the next phase would have been the Outer stone circle, comprising >100 large sarsen megaliths, followed by two inner circles, Northern and Southern.



*The bank and ditch of Avebury henge (foreground) and outer circle, with stones of inner circles and inner stone settings.*

*Credit: University of Southampton*

#### Avebury inner settings

The Northern inner circle encloses three megaliths once known as the Beckhampton Cove; while within the Southern inner circle is a stone setting called the 'Z features' and the Obelisk, plus the largest megalith in Britain at 100 tons, which extends three metres below ground – and is leaning! Use of geophysical surveying techniques indicated the 'Z features' could mark out part of a square, suggesting the possible presence of a building. The question arose as to which came first, the earthwork or these stone settings, and an alternative sequence could have been that the earthwork was possibly constructed later to enclose the stones, as at Coneybury, near Stonehenge. Other examples indicate a process of metamorphosis: from mortuary buildings into passage graves, burying both stones and earthwork within a large mound. Also at nearby Silbury Hill, which was created ~2450bc over a short time period, an earlier small mound has been buried under a huge artificial mound.

Why is Avebury located here? An early/mid Neolithic settlement had existed to one side of a low ridge near the stream, where the inner circles were later set up. In examining Keiller's notes it was found they had discovered a building, at that time considered to be medieval, although the presence of Neolithic pottery within the postholes could indicate a Neolithic longhouse or hall. These remains were possibly traced by stones placed in a square setting (the 'Z features'), marking and memorialising the earlier house. If such a house/hall was the foundational building, could The Cove also represent a similar scenario? These ideas emphasise the need to focus on the processes of monument creation, to examine the sequence of earlier structures contained within it. Other locations in this landscape include West Kennet long barrow

which is known to have evolved through time, and also Windmill Hill and West Kennet Avenue. Fieldwork at Avebury is continuing, and the story will keep unfolding - so we hope to hear more of this from Josh in future.

*This is a short summary of Josh Pollard's presentation, with apologies for any errors. A longer version will appear soon on the SAS website [www.southamptonarchaeology.uk](http://www.southamptonarchaeology.uk).*

## Southampton Heritage Open Days, September 2023

*By Sarah Hanna*

During **Heritage Open Days 8-16 September**, six heritage venues in Southampton's Old Town were freely open to the public for the first time in decades. Thanks to Jo Bailey, Monuments & Memorials officer and the team of knowledgeable volunteer guides.

**9/10 Sept: Bargate** – We're all familiar with Southampton's 12<sup>th</sup> century gateway, which has been much extended in later years. I joined a crowd waiting for the doors to open, to climb the stone steps and enter the 15<sup>th</sup> century Banqueting Hall on the first floor, with its panels of Sir Bevois and Ascupart (rather dark due to past re-painting) and beautiful restored stained glass windows (*see right*). The guides told us about the Bargate's long history; but sadly the roof was closed for forthcoming repairs.



**16 Sept: Weigh House + Vault**, French Street – Reopened after repair and restoration earlier this year, it was wonderful to enter this 13<sup>th</sup> century building which housed the royal Tron (weigh beam), used to assess the customs to be paid on wool before export. Bombing and a fire in WW2 left the building roofless, but the vault (*see left*) is well preserved and entered by an external passage.

*Storage vault for woollen exports underneath the Weigh House. S Hanna*

**Castle Vault** – Now part of the city walls, this massive 12<sup>th</sup> century vault was used in the Middle Ages to house the King's wine, a tax on imports of wine so important to Southampton's trade. The vault was used as an air raid shelter in WW2 and can be visited on regular Tours of the Town Walls, and Blitz Tours.

**St Michael's Vault** – has been repaired and fitted with lights, since an earlier visit to record graffiti with the SAS graffiti team (quite difficult in total darkness!) **Prison Vault** in French Street was used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to house prisoners; and as a WW2 air raid shelter, it retains walls and bench seats from that time.

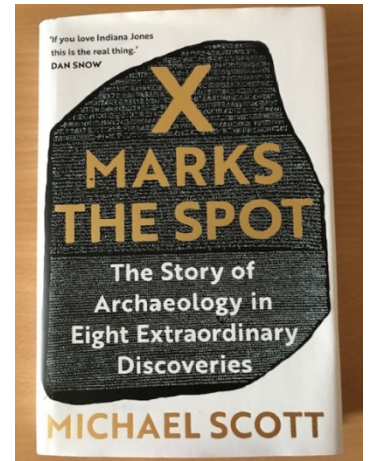
**9-11 & 15-17 Sept God's House Tower** – I visited on 16<sup>th</sup> September when the Tower was very busy. I was most impressed by the *Stories Behind the Stones*, which includes a Timeline of the Tower and fascinating vignettes about the prisoners held there, and their 'wardens'. The 'cells' are tiny and they recall how hard life in an 18<sup>th</sup> century prison could be.



*View from the roof of God's House Tower west towards Town Quay. S Hanna*

## Review of X Marks the Spot

This is a very readable book by archaeologist Michael Scott. Falling into the category of 'popular archaeology', I think most people will learn something about each of the eight discoveries he describes, even though some are very well known: the Rosetta Stone, the ancient manuscripts of the Taklamakum Desert, Machu Picchu, the finds of the Olduvai Gorge, the Terracotta Army, the Uluburun shipwreck, the 'Princess of Altai' and the Keros Enigma. Each represents a breakthrough in their field and Scott describes not only what was found, by whom and how, but also gives a summary of the period when it was active/used and of the times in which it was found. He also explains why the item was significant and how the understanding gained from it has developed in succeeding years.



While there are clearly many other 'breakthrough' discoveries which could have been chosen, Scott has selected finds requiring different archaeological approaches through which he is able to demonstrate the development of archaeology as a discipline. He also highlights and discusses the different assumptions and attitudes which have prevailed regarding the ownership of the finds and by whom and where they are displayed.

The book covers over two hundred years of archaeological discoveries with finds dating back from three and a half million years ago to the most recent from the 1400s. In describing who discovered these finds, Scott tracks a change from early 'explorers' through to professional archaeologists but for each, he is able to capture something of their motivation and the fascination which drove them. If you know someone who likes archaeology (!), I think this could make a very good Christmas present.

*Published by Hodder and Stoughton in hardback in 2023. Published price £25.00.*

Sue Davies

## Proposed Scheduled Monument Survey Team

Southampton Archaeology Society is looking to set up a small team of volunteers to undertake monitoring on local scheduled monuments. A project by the **National Trust** and **South Downs National Park** on our doorstep has pulled together a series of toolkits to encourage local communities to help keep an eye on scheduled monuments through regular checks and mapping of changes both positive and negative. The ambition is that groups could informally adopt monuments, and might then undertake further research and interpretation to share them with the wider community and visitors. Scheduled monuments are the UK's legally-protected archaeological sites. We all have a duty to look after them since they are part of our national story and form our past, present and future. Do you know what scheduled monuments are on your doorstep? You can check using the **National Heritage List for England (NHLE)** which is easily available online for checking. You might be aware of the larger scheduled monuments in Telegraph Woods, Lords Hill and the Common, but do you know about the scheduled Bronze Age Barrow on Moorgreen Road? This won't be limited to Southampton, with opportunities for the team to go for walks in the New Forest and further afield, and to share their findings with Historic England.

Find out more here: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/sussex/changing-chalk-monument-mentors>. Printouts of the toolkits will also be available at meetings. We're looking for people to work actively for local heritage, so please register your interest - especially if you might be interested in a leading role.

**James Brown National Trust Archaeologist London & South East Region**

**Email:** [James.Brown@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:James.Brown@nationaltrust.org.uk) **Mobile:** 07971 002675

## Some forthcoming events for your interest

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November** 2.30pm The Friends of Southampton Old Cemetery (FoSOC) invite SAS members to attend a **Remembrance Sunday Service**, to be held at the Old Cemetery on 12<sup>th</sup> November at 2.30pm. Commencing at the Cross of Sacrifice and finishing at the Belgian War Memorial. FoSOC is pleased to let you know that the Lord Mayor of Southampton Cllr Valerie Laurent will be attending this event.

**Saturday 11th/Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November** 10.00am to 5.00pm (last entry 3pm). First **Stonehenge Festival of Neolithic Ideas** at Stonehenge, Amesbury, Wiltshire: revealing how advances in science have developed our understanding of the Neolithic period. The festival will explore the tools and technologies used by Neolithic people to shape the world around them. Entry is included in general admission to Stonehenge, save 10% with online booking at [english-heritage.org.uk](http://english-heritage.org.uk) (free entry for members of EH and NT).

**Saturday 18 Nov 2023** 9.50am to 4.30pm - **Hampshire Field Club: Archaeology Section Conference and AGM** 'What we've done and what we've found'. Speakers from Hampshire and from further afield will talk about their recent work in the county. Venue: Hampshire Record Office Cinema, Sussex Street, Winchester SO23 8TH. Cost to HFC members: £18, non-members: £23. For further details and booking, please see [www.ticketsource.co.uk/hantsfieldclubarchaeology](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/hantsfieldclubarchaeology)

**Wednesday 22nd November** 7.30pm Southampton Classical Association lecture to be given by Dr Carey Fleiner, Winchester University: '*Roman Women, Sheep and Wool*'. Talks are free to attend. Venue: King Edward VI School, Wilton Road, Shirley. Further information from [southamptonca@gmail.com](mailto:southamptonca@gmail.com)

[www.southamptonarchaeology.uk](http://www.southamptonarchaeology.uk)

 Southampton Archaeology Society



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Lectures are normally held in St. Joseph's Hall, Bugle Street SO14 2AH, 7.30pm on the 2nd Tuesday each month (subject to Covid restrictions as current). Refreshments are available from 7.00pm. Talks are free to paid-up SAS members, £3 to guests.

### Subscription Rates 2023/24

Individuals	£12.00
Senior Citizens	£10.00
Juniors/Students	£10.00
Family	£16.00

### Contact us

[www.southamptonarchaeology.uk](http://www.southamptonarchaeology.uk)

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### 2022-2023 SAS Committee

**Chair** – John Langran

**Vice-Chair** – Martyn Dowell

**Hon Treasurer** – Sue Davies

**Hon Secretary** – Mandy Kesby

**Committee Members** – Sarah Hanna, Matt Garner, James Brown, Brian de Lara.

Archaeology Advisor: Dr Andy Russel.

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

#### **Sue Davies, Hon Treasurer.**

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