



Newsletter

Winter 2017

❁ News ❁ Meeting ❁ Reports ❁ Diary Dates ❁

❁ Travellers Tales ❁

Contents

Chairman's Editor's Notes	3
A Day in Wallingford	4
Kindertransport.....	6
Denise Baker	9
The Process Pixies – Unsung Heroes of Archaeological Exploration	11
Book Review	15
Julia's Jottings	17
New Year Party.....	26
WARG Calendar	27
Archaeology Leisure Course	28
WARG Committee Members.....	28



The WARG Newsletter provides reports on the activities of WARG, the society for Winchester archaeology and local history. It also carries other information of interest to the WARG membership.

For more information on WARG, and to join, call 01962 867490, e-mail membership@warg.org.uk or visit www.warg.org.uk

Chairman's Editor's Notes

There are no Chairman's notes as we still have no chairman. Firstly I would just re-iterate Chris Sellen's – the out-gone chairman – remarks. "Fancy chairing for a bit? Why not? There's no better way of getting involved, meeting some really interesting people and having people look up to you – even if they are taller than you.

What does the Chairman do exactly? In short:

- They run three committee meetings a year and try and make them end on time
- They stand up and control an AGM once a year
- Introduce our monthly speakers with a witty riposte and joke during questions
- Attend a fair few awareness events per year, like the St. Cross Fete, where they stand in the little orange tent showing people some of the artefacts we've unearthed over the years
- With the dig committee they'll talk about places to dig and how to best use the ample professional resources at our disposal, and kit we have accumulated over the years.
- In other words, get all the kudos for an amazing range of interesting and successful events.

Why not indeed?" Talk to Chris Sellen if you are interested.

Winchester Excavations Committee

The Winchester Excavations Committee, which is responsible for publishing the big blue volumes of Winchester Studies, the reports based on the massive 1960s excavations directed by Martin Biddle, is ploughing ahead despite some hiccups in funding. In this newsletter you should find a flier for the truly magnificent Historic Towns Atlas, and earlier in the year there was the launch of *The People of Early Winchester*, an amazing volume whose research was made possible by our workparties at F2. Early next year *The Search for the Saxon Minsters*, will be published. This is a volume of reconstructions of the pre-conquest religious buildings, with a scholarly commentary by Martin.

If you want to support the work by becoming a Friend, please visit <http://winchesterstudies.org.uk/friends/> where you can sign up

Dick Selwood

A Day in Wallingford

Wallingford is a town on the River Thames in Oxfordshire. It is steeped in history and proclaims a colourful past, which is why Julia decided to go there for our September walking tour.

It was the river that first attracted settlers to the area, and initially people believed that it was a Roman town because of the shape of the town defences and the grid-like pattern of the streets. However, it was the Anglo-Saxons who built the first town on the site, evidenced by the large 6th century pagan cemetery found in Wallingford.

Later, King Alfred needed to defend his kingdom against further Viking attacks so he built a series of fortified towns or burhs and Wallingford was one of the largest – in fact the same size as the capital Winchester. Enclosed on three sides by earthen walls, and by the river on the 4th side, the original 9th century street layout is still largely unchanged so we were in for a good day!



We gathered in the market place where Don introduced us to the town...reminding us that it was the fictional town, Causton, that featured in the popular TV rural crime drama “Midsomer Murders”.

We then set off for the site of Wallingford Castle, which occupies a quarter of the town. After the Battle of Hastings in 1066, William the Conqueror and his army crossed the Thames here which made it easy for him to march on London. He ordered a castle to be built there and gave it continuing royal importance. Throughout the 12th and 13th centuries Wallingford grew to be one of the most important royal fortresses in England. It was Empress Matilda’s stronghold during the civil war with King Stephen, and the town’s charter was granted by her son Henry 2nd in 1155 in recognition. It is one of only 4 towns mentioned in Magna Carta in 1215. It can claim to have sheltered many royal inhabitants, but Cromwell’s Council of State ordered its demolition in 1652, so that what remains today are the impressive earthworks on which the walls once stood.

A ford pre-dated the first bridge, which was built in 1141. Today’s



bridge is in the same place.

Don told us that in Victorian times 2,000 people lived in the town and enjoyed the services of 50 pubs!

It can also boast artistic and literary connections. Agatha Christie lived at Winterbrook House in the town, where many of her books were written. After her death in 1976 she was buried at St Mary's Cholsey where she worshipped. Visitors to the town can pick up a leaflet called 'The Agatha Christie Trail' from the tourist information centre which takes you on a circular walk past locations prominent in her life.

In Thames Street there is a plaque to Victorian artist George Dunlop Leslie RA who lived there from 1884-1907. Another important family of artists, the Hayllars, lived nearby in the house which had once been home to Judge William Blackstone, a local resident, lawyer and author of the 'Commentaries on the Laws of England'. His work was used when the Americans wrote their Constitution.

After a welcome lunch break we gathered again in the Market Place to go to Flint House, the home of Wallingford Museum, which was specially opened for us. It is an intimate local history museum housed on 2 floors of a Medieval oak-beamed house. From the windows you can see the remains of the great earthworks of Alfred's planned town.

Thanks are due to both Julia and Don for selecting such an interesting place to visit, and for giving us such a fascinating walk around it. Wallingford is well worth a visit - our walk was based on *A Walk around Wallingford's History*, available from the Tourist office.

Edwina Cole

Kindertransport

On his welcome return to WARG, Professor Martin Parsons took as his theme the plight of the children who were caught up in the madness that preceded WW2, and the efforts that were made by others to rescue them before and during the conflict.

In his introduction, he explained that France and the USA as well as Germany had a Jewish problem. However, it was in 1933 that the campaign of persecution against the Jews began in earnest in Germany. Jews needed a visa to leave, but these soon became impossible to obtain. The peak of pre-war persecution of the Jews occurred on November 9/10 1938 on the night of Kristallnacht when 267 synagogues were destroyed, and 7,500 Jewish stores were smashed. 100 people were killed and 30,000 ended up in concentration camps. We even heard about a concentration camp for children.

Many countries would not take Jewish refugees, the worst culprit being the USA. Jews themselves were restricted in what they were allowed to take out of Germany.

However, in Britain Sir Samuel Hoare was working on behalf of the Jewish refugees and he supported the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. There was even a debate in the House of Commons on 21st November 1938 when the problem was discussed. An unspecified number of children up to the age of 17 were to be taken into the UK. A £50 bond had to be posted for each child and the children were to travel in sealed trains. (The reason for this is not known.) The RCM (Refugee Children's Movement) sent representatives to Germany and Austria to establish systems for choosing and organizing the children and carrying out the transportation.

On November 25th an appeal for foster homes went out on the BBC Home Service and soon there were 500 offers. There was no insistence that the prospective homes should be Jewish, just that they would offer a home. Priority lists were drawn up of those most in peril. These included teenagers already in concentration camps, Polish children, children in Jewish orphanages, those whose parents were too poor, and children with a parent in a concentration camp. There must have been people in Germany who helped with this process.

The children could take only one sealed suitcase. They couldn't

take any valuables, and only 10 marks or less in money. Some had nothing but a manila tag, which had their number on the front and their name on the back.

The first group of 200 soon arrived in Harwich, and in the following nine months 10,000 unaccompanied children, mainly Jewish, came to the UK. The last boat came from Belgium to the UK on 14th May 1940 carrying 74 children.

There were also Kindertransports to Belgium, France and the Netherlands.

Many children arrived at Liverpool Street Station. Today there are 3 memorials at the station commemorating their journey to freedom. "Kindertransport-the arrival" was unveiled in 2006. It was sculpted by Frank Meisler, who was himself a passenger on a Kindertransport train. Around the base of the memorial are bronze blocks on which are listed the cities from which the children fled: Cologne, Hanover, Nuremberg, Stuttgart, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Bremen, Munich, Danzig, Breslau, Prague, Hamburg, Mannheim, Leipzig, Berlin and Vienna.



A plaque is situated on the wall at Hope Square in the station, which reads: *Hope Square, dedicated to the Children of the Kindertransport, who found hope and safety in Britain through the gateway of Liverpool Street Station.*

Dr Eva Roman was a Jewish child who came to England on the 'Manhattan'. She wrote short stories and put her secret thoughts and dreams into them. Professor Parsons had the privilege of hearing about her experiences. She said they had no rights to go to the synagogue, which was all part of the plan to dehumanize Jews in Germany. Nazi officials insisted on being present when the children's cases were packed and there were emotional goodbyes from the children as they left. Many were never to see their parents again. Eva was 12 when this happened to her, but she didn't speak about it until 2009. She had never shared her memories with her son, and died in 2011 of dementia.

She remembered 5 girls and 5 boys who were taken aside before joining the ship. They were stripped naked and their clothes were minutely examined whilst they stood in an unheated room. They were asked intimate questions before being allowed to join the ship. When they arrived in the UK they were all medically examined and then distributed widely across the country. Some went to Mousehole, in Cornwall, where there is a reunion of Jews Free School children every year. It is known that a number of older children joined the armed forces when they became 18, and joined the fight against the Nazis.

Kindertransport saved 10,000 lives and, while many were well treated there were problems. These included the lack of family life, alien cultures and language, always living as a guest, survivor syndrome and the legacy of a lifetime of searching. Very few of these children spoke English, so they had to learn it. Those who went to Gentile families missed their Jewish culture, which they needed. Many were just tolerated, and for some there was an unending search for family members, siblings etc.

In conclusion, Professor Parsons drew parallels with Kindertransport and the work now being done with Migrant children coming into Europe. Many are escaping religious and political persecution and have witnessed 'pograms' and genocides. They experience the same level of uncertainty, insecurity, fear and apprehension as children experienced in the 1940s.

This gave us all a lot to think about, and was a sobering reminder of the consequences of war and the effect it has on young people.

Edwina Cole

Denise Baker:

29th November 1927 - 7th September 2017

It is with great sadness that we have to report that Denise Baker died in September, after a relatively short illness and only a few weeks short of her 90th birthday.

She was born and spent her childhood in Southampton. When she was evacuated to the country during the war she determinedly walked home – an early demonstration of her strength of will. As the oldest of three with her father away at work and her mother often ill, the burden



Denise digging in 2006. Her trowel was on her coffin at her crowded memorial service

of looking after the twins Hazel and Neville, and managing the household fell on her. Despite this she explored Southampton, the New Forest and the South Coast on her bike. Although she left school at 14 or 15, she was encouraged, when working at Southampton Council, to carry on her education, which led to an external degree, ending with a year at Homerton College, Cambridge and a BA in history.

With this she began teaching primary children in challenging areas of Southampton and then became a Lecturer in Education at King Alfred's College, followed by becoming Vice Principal at Bedford Teachers Training college, commuting between Bedford and Winchester

at the week-ends, and finally she was the organiser and manager of Basingstoke Teachers Centre.

Alongside this she had a wide range of interests. An early interest in travel, with several walking holidays in the Alps, Scotland, Scottish Isles, France, Prague etc continued throughout her life and in recent

years she visited Russia, China, New Zealand, Greece and Turkey, Iceland, and different parts of Scotland

Other areas are demonstrated by her membership of, and active involvement with, Hampshire Ornithological Club; Hampshire Wildlife; Winchester Trust for Conservation; Hillier Garden Centre; The Landmark Trust; Otter Conservation Group, Skye. She was a strong supporter of the Winchester Festival, and the Winchester Chamber Music Festival for many years. A keen detective novel follower, she probably read several novels a week the whole of her adult life.

She was an avid gardener, and as well as her own garden in Winchester she visited and took interest in the history of many famous gardens around the south of England. In the last 20 years, she took up first wood-carving, then painting and drawing, working with her tutor Linda Bee.

But it was her strong interest in history and archaeology that we know her for. She was an early and energetic member of WARG, and when we resumed our digging she was one of the first into the trenches, despite at that time approaching 80. When, after several seasons she began to find that getting out of the trench after a session of trowelling was a problem, she took on finds processing. She was a volunteer at the Hampshire Records Office and over twenty years completed a series of historical studies of all the significant houses in St Cross. This is now almost ready for publication.

Wider Winchester got to know her better in 2007/8 when her partner Chris was Mayor and she was Mayoress. She joined him on 850 odd events and meetings; she was responsible for the year's fundraising and raised £40,000 for four charities – the highlight being her own 12,000 ft. sky dive a few weeks before her 80th birthday!

It is impossible to convey more than a brief trace of the clever energetic person that was Denise. She will be greatly missed.

Dick Selwood from notes by Chris Pines

The Process Pixies – Unsung Heroes of Archaeological Exploration

I was watching a programme reviewing archaeological exploration over the last year, when a presenter mentioned ‘those unsung heroes of the dig’ – the finds processors – actually I think the term used was ‘pot washers’. It made me think! How often have I heard Tony Robinson mention the finds processors on ‘Time Team’? Rarely. Have I ever seen the TV processors at work? Only the Geophysics chaps and maybe the cleaning crew once or twice when it has been PR on a community dig?

Have you ever wondered why the WARG diggers uncover finds swathed in mud or ingrained with centuries of detritus, when the Time Team diggers have ‘just found this’ shiny, clean artefact? As if!

It was not until I happened to comment on this to a few of the WARG Process Pixies – I was going to say Princesses but we do have a few Princes Charming on the team – in the presence of Techer, that he immediately challenged me to write on the subject.

So – here goes; a laudation for the WARG Process Pixies, and all other ‘pot washers’. Or - as our own dear Big Dig diarist expressed it – *‘the people who knew what they were doing’* – well - most of the time.

First, I have to say that ‘pot washing’ is a very small part of finds processing. A few items may be washed, not all are suitable for this treatment. A few are wet wiped and some can only be brushed or delicately excavated. It is important not to destroy more than has been done by the digging. I must then ‘take off my hat’ to the diggers, who spend back-breaking hours in often muddy trenches. There’s another thought – opening a trench is like putting out the washing, it often works as a modern rain dance. Being too decrepit to be a digger myself, I respect the work they do, as, without their strong muscles and eagle eyes, there would be a dearth of finds to process.

The processors have a similar challenge. Standing for hours, screening, sorting, brushing, coughing in the dust, sometimes washing, counting, weighing, and measuring often unidentifiable objects. They need a degree of knowledge, and often not a little imagination, to determine if a find merits upgrading to a fully processed artefact, or consigning to the ‘chuck it’ bucket. The washing is in a bowl of cold, dirty, water, followed by egg tray drying, waiting for them to dry, labelling

and bagging. Why do we do it? Simply, the fascination of finding something, not necessarily very old, but something – or someone – with whom we can identify. Archaeology, like history, starts today.

As WARG's happy pod of Process Pixies, with whom it is always a pleasure to work, we turn up at F2 on a Monday afternoon, to help the Curator. We are rewarded with a huge degree of trust and a variety of processing beyond the pot washing stage. I never cease to be amazed at the depth and range of knowledge existing within such a small group of 'amateurs' and the occasional specialist. F2's treasures, and our Curator, until recently, Helen, augmented by other occasional 'real' archaeologists, provide us with the opportunity to explore, and learn, about everything from a coin to a coprolite, a burial to a battle injury.



Perhaps, engendered by my former profession, my particular interest is with our year's work on the burials and cremations from Victoria Road in Winchester. There are hundreds, which have been painstakingly unpacked, every bone labelled, and repacked for storage with the greatest respect due to the people they were. Well maybe we didn't label every grain of the

cremations, ashes and dust are difficult!

Bones are brilliant. They are truly a meeting with the ancestors. Look at the skull of someone who lived a millennium ago and you are looking into the face of someone who lived, and hopefully laughed and loved, in the space we now occupy.

We can learn how long they lived, how hard they worked and sometimes how horrifically



they died. Particularly poignant are the bones of babies and small children who never had the chance to experience life.

I feel rather sorry for future generations of archaeologists, who, with the changes in practices around death, may have to rely more on subjective accounts of life, rather than real human bones.

'Everyone becomes what they leave behind: the real person becomes the remembered person, and once the direct memory too is gone, what remains is an imagined person defined by whatever documents may survive.' Martin Wiggins 2016

Pottery is another significant indicator of how our ancestors existed. A joy to jigsaw puzzlers when there is sufficient to reconstruct and identify an object. But if you can find the attachment of a pot handle, you can place your thumb into the thumb print of the potter who fashioned the artefact centuries/millennia ago. The connection is direct and tangible –spine tingling.



Mr. McGovern, a local metal detectorist, spent years exploring the area around Cheriton, and his vast collection has passed through the hands of the Cultural Trust and the WARG Pixies. A horse shoe found in Cheriton Wood, dating to the same era as the Battle of Cheriton: cast by a small war horse or a 17th century plough horse? Many years ago, I found this very similar horse shoe attached to my

house, not far from the battle field. I wonder - Hopton's or Waller's war horse or a 17th century local farm horse?

We are now over a hundred years on from WW1 and 70+ from WW2, so finding items from these times is not only significant, but also a connection within the living memory of many of our generation. I say bones are my main interest, but not the one

which has been closest to my heart. That was a 'McGovern' find. Whilst sorting the finds, my attention was drawn to a small metal object with, apparently, a glass insert. Circular in shape with a diameter of



approximately a centimetre, no bigger than my smallest finger nail, it 'contained' a metal needle and a lump of earth. After some time, we determined that this might just be a miniature compass. It was not until sometime later, that I was able to confirm our assessment.

I was revisiting the Spitfire and Hurricane Memorial Museum at the former RAF Manston, in Kent, with an item to donate to their archives. (This small museum is very well worth visiting if you are in that area. It is not far from Broadstairs. No entry fee, but run by visitor donations, and a good coffee shop/restaurant, <http://www.spitfiremuseum.org.uk>) My particular link is related to my mother, who assembled the Spitfire's Merlin engines as her WW2 war work, and was one of the founder members of the Spitfire Association in Southampton. Although she had a full working life, her proudest time was with the Merlins and her beloved Spitfires. When she died, a thoughtful Registrar entered her occupation in the Register as 'retired Spitfire Assembler'. I could see my mother smile.



I digress. Taking a turn around the museum I was astounded to find another miniature compass with a full explanation of its purpose. These tiny objects were concealed within the buttons of flight crew uniforms, to be used as a navigational aid if they were shot down. The caption reads: *'when unscrewed, these RAF tunic buttons reveal small compasses for escape purposes.'*

If only I had known, I would have searched the hundreds of buttons in the McGovern collection, to find the partner of the compass. Clearly the wearer of this uniform did return, at least long enough to lose his button. I would dearly love to know who he was and if he might have flown one of the Spitfires on which my mother worked.

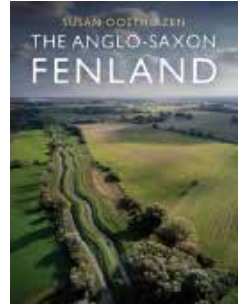
So – whatever people may choose to call us, 'pot washers' is very far down the list of nomenclature for what we do. We are in general 'amateurs' which is defined as engaging in a study for pleasure, but maybe 'pleasure seekers' is not quite appropriate.

Perhaps someone can come up with a more suitable 'nickname' to replace 'pot washers' which is more suited to the kitchen scullions of old – honourable though their work may also have been.

Janet Backhouse

Book Review

Oosthuizen, Susan, *The Anglo-Saxon Fenland*. Windgather Press, 2017 Pbk ISBN 978-1-911188-08-7 (156 pages £29.95 - e-book £14.99)



I wonder if, sometimes, we focus too closely on what we know? For example, the Saxons in Wessex? When I spotted an advert for this book, I thought I would broaden my Anglo-Saxon knowledge. Fenland = Ely; Spalding; Hereward the Wake; Eels;what else?

The common vision is of Angles and Saxons invading and filling up an unmanaged and under occupied Fenland, which, even at the time of Domesday essentially remained a wilderness where Hereward the Wake could hide and annoy the Normans. Wrong.

There is clear evidence of a strong Roman farming occupation in Fenland with grain exported. But did it empty when the Roman Empire ended? Using Domesday information, the population in the northern fens computes at 0.9 people per acre compared to 12.9 in nearby Cambridge. The image during the period 400-1000AD has been of Fenland being “one of the loneliest pieces of country within 100 miles of London” (Victorian County History). And yet by the 1330s, it was one of the wealthiest and most populated areas of England with only London paying more Lay Subsidy taxes. The popular myth is that Fenland only recovered from the Roman departure once the church and its land holdings were reformed in the 970s and the Normans came to add discipline.

Oosthuizen goes step-by-step proving how, in the 400-1000AD period, the Hundreds were managed in a co-operative way in ‘Commons’ to maximise farming output. She is extremely convincing in her arguments that, after the Romans left, the Fenland British just carried on farming. But they switched from the Roman emphasis on grain for export, to dairy farming for subsistence. This suited their ability to grow and manage grasslands. Water needed to be managed. We Wessex people think that we were clever inventing Water Meadows to feed cattle and sheep on the ‘spring bite’. She shows how the people

of the fen were doing this 600 years earlier. Oosthuizen analyses the physical structure of the Hundreds and the waterways (natural and man-made) to show how each hundred ensured a cross section of sedge, withy, drowned grassland, dry grassland and also how settlements were located on the higher lands. High in that part of the world might mean 20m. In one chapter she convincingly calculates that, if we exclude lands that could be either deliberately or naturally flooded, then the Fenland population was actually 10.5 per 'dry' acre compared to Cambridge's 12.9. Another chapter analyses place names and shows that almost all are derived from Roman or ancient British roots and that only a handful are Saxon in origin. She acknowledges that there were Anglo and Saxon incomers – indeed some of them affluent - but that they were not conquerors, but rather were assimilated into the native population. Indeed, she argues that some arrived before 400AD. Analysis of burial grounds and archaeological artefacts adds strength to her thesis. Her whole theme is continuity, not conquest.

The writing style is very readable. A prologue and epilogue sandwich seven themed chapters. At the outset of each chapter, Oosthuizen lays out the main themes to be explored and chapters close with conclusions. The photography is good and well reproduced (as you expect from Windgather who specialise in landscape archaeology). The maps are excellent; there is a two-page glossary (wonderful terminology populates this book: clows, gleaves, lodes, pishgotes) and 12 pages of bibliography and good indexing.

This outstanding landscape study of Anglo-Saxon Fenland is a very good read and blows away old myths.

Techer Jones

Julia's Jottings

A good walk

Whether you're a rambler, a dog walker or just fascinated by Britain's rich pre-history past, a new website should give you a good excuse to get out and about next year, discovering some of our islands' 4,000 hillforts. Hillforts obviously served a variety of purposes: military camps, places of refuge when under attack, community areas and so on, and no-one's quite sure which heading some of the hillforts come under. The Ridgeway along the Wiltshire Downs holds a long row of such sites and several are well known. Avebury of course needs no introduction but it is a well-attended tourist site these days, with all the paraphernalia attending a National Trust area and often far too crowded to enable silent reflections on these wonderful places. Places like Maiden Castle, Hod Hill, Figsbury Ring and Barbury Castle here in the south can compare with Old Oswestry in Shropshire, Swinhope Hill in Lincolnshire and Swarthy Hill in Cumbria. So, take a picnic and a good pair of walking boots and have a great winter!

Website is <https://hillforts.arch.ox.ac.uk/>



Figsbury rings (© National Trust)

Don't judge a book by its cover!

We're so used to a man-made mound being the remains of a Norman castle motte that this tends to be the default assumption for all mounds. However the 20ft high Montem Mound in Slough has been investigated and Reading University archaeologists have found that it's actually a rare Saxon monument, roughly dating to the time of



Montem Mound, Slough
Nigel Cox [CC BY-SA
2.0]

the Sutton Hoo burial mounds. Interestingly, at nearby Taplow another burial mound was also revealed in its true light. These mounds probably mark the resting place of someone of high status and could contain artefacts. Jim Leary of Reading University is leading a project called “Extending Histories from medieval mottes to prehistoric round mounds” but thankfully known as Round Mounds! These mounds are being radiocarbon analysed to give clues as to when they were built and what the surrounding environment was like.

So next time you see a man-made mound, think in broader terms

An appendix

Our recent evening walk in Stockbridge has called to mind a probably almost forgotten fact by one of our long-standing members. John Duckworth, an articled clerk at a Winchester solicitors, was acting for the owners of the house just to the north east of the old bridge over the River Test which was being replaced by the County Council, probably in either 1954 or 55. The house owners were required to convey a small piece of their land as the bridge and road were being built wider than what they were replacing. The council put up a new boundary wall for the house but a large mature tree, possibly a beech John thinks, stood on the line of the new wall so the wall had a small semi-circle built into it to go round the tree. Obviously the tree was disgruntled at root disturbance etc and was eventually felled, leaving the small circle of wall were it was as a memorial to its one-time existence. One must also remember that at that time the High Street, the A30, continued straight up the hill past where the Test Valley School now is, but the county wanted to slow down the racing traffic along the High Street so bought the land to the north to create that large curve and short bit of dual carriageway.

I recently drove over the bridge and slowed down to check on the semi-circle and yes, there it is: an apparent anomaly!

An unusual surprise

Since the early days of their life on this planet, mankind has often buried a favoured friend or servant in or close to their own grave – that is, a horse or a dog, loved and looked after by their “owner”. Indeed

Dick's back garden has several slabs covering the remains of much loved feline companions, but a recent case is a bit different.



The dolphin skeleton
 Credit: Guernsey Archaeology

Archaeologists in Guernsey have uncovered the remains of a porpoise, probably buried in the 14th century. Its grave was carefully cut and may in fact have been an early form of fridge for this food source – a favourite dish in medieval times. Although porpoises apparently have a strong significance in Christianity (though heaven knows where this idea comes from: I don't recall anything

in the New Testament about this creature), no-one yet knows whether it was buried in salt to preserve it or because the bod who buried it wasn't supposed to have it. We'll never know, but I like to think that it had been buried after accidentally beaching itself and some monk had a kind heart!

Cheddar Gorge secrets

Human bones unearthed in Gough's Cave, Cheddar in the 1980s have recently been analysed and some surprising facts have come to life. The flesh had been expertly removed from the bones which were then decorated and gnawed by other humans around 15,000 years ago. The bones belonged to a 3year old child, 2 adolescents and at least 2 adults, and it's believed that this might not just have been straight cannibalism but have contained an element of ritual. The curious thing is that the bones were engraved with zigzag patterns before being gnawed upon and broken open for the marrow. We've known for some time about human skulls from the Cheddar area being used as drinking vessels, so DNA testing is to be used to see if the limb bones bear any relationship to the skulls. The cave-dwellers were hunter-gatherers from Spain and France, who crossed to Britain across the land mass that existed then, and were the first humans to re-colonise Britain after the end of the last Ice Age, approx. 14,700 years ago. Of all the many human bones found in these caves about 40% had human bite marks on and about 60% had been butchered. The bones showed

no signs of burning , suggesting that if they were cooked then they were boiled not roasted.

Hadrian's Wall reveals more secrets

Several WARG members have dug at Hadrian's Wall – some of them for a few years – so they may well have been involved with some of the latest secrets to be uncovered in this amazing length of Roman engineering and life.



The cAD105-120 barrack block below the Hadrianic fort (©Vindolanda Chartiabile Trust)

A cavalry barracks, pre-dating the wall, has been uncovered under the wall and containing thousands of military and personal possessions dating back almost 2,000 years ago. The barracks, underneath Vindolanda, have been dated to AD105 whilst Hadrian only began his building of the great wall in AD122. The finds consist of large quantities of weapons – swords, lances, arrowheads and ballista bolts – but also lots of combs, bath clogs, shoes, stylus pens, hairpins, brooches, wooden spoons, bowls, “cavalry bling” (quote) and beautifully woven cloth.

The barracks consisted of 8 rooms, stables for the horses, and living accommodation with ovens and fireplaces – all astonishingly about 3.5 metres under the 4th century stone fortress. Much of the pottery has graffiti on so it may be possible to work out who some of these people were. And just why were such valuable cavalry swords abandoned? Probably because the occupants had to leave in a hurry and could only take with them what they could carry, and presumably a child was more important than a favoured weapon.

More Egyptian treasures

Several of you will, like me, have visited Egypt's Valley of the Kings and marvelled at the artwork and artefacts in the tombs there. Now however a new tomb in the nearby necropolis of Draa El-Naga has revealed a small room at ground level as well as an underground burial chamber with several occupants and many goodies. Dating to the time of the 3 greats – Tutankhamun, Nefertiti and Hatshepsut – from around 1550BC to 1292BC, the principal occupant was a goldsmith

called Amenemhat. He was surrounded by other skeletons, about 150 ushabti statues, 4 wooden sarcophagi, jewellery and about 50 funerary cones. Archaeologists are expecting to find more tombs from different periods in the area and have already discovered that the tomb was re-used between 1070BC and 664BC.

One must remember that modern Egypt is built on top of Ancient Egypt so it's inevitable that every time any digging is done gorgeous things come to light. This is a story therefore that could run and run, and though I've visited Egypt twice I know that if I go again there will be more wonders at which I can gasp.

Real Fakes

I tend to the belief that the artefacts in a museum are the genuine article unless they say otherwise, but in a strange case at Joint Mitnor, a cave in Buckfastleigh Devon, things are not all they seem. The cave (well ok not quite a museum) houses large quantities of fossilised bones of animals from over 120,000 years ago. These bones are proof that all those years ago bears, bison, hippos, wolves and massive elephants all roamed free round our small islands. Discovered in 1938, the bones remained in the cave, protected behind a steel security door, until September 2015 when thieves smashed the locks on the door and stole what bones they could reach. The strange bit comes now – replicas of the stolen bones had been created by scanning original bones excavated from the cave in the 1960s, and 3D printed before being cast in gypsum. To bring the cave fully up to the 21st century, a virtual reality interpretation of the cave, as it was in the temperate period between two ice ages, has been created for visitors who probably cannot imagine anything very much without models and so on. Astonishing, one way or the other.

Square Circles?

Those of us who think that circles are round must think again – a square “circle” has been found in the midst of Avebury stone circle. Around 98ft wide, this square of stones is believed to be one of the site's earliest structures. Possibly erected round the remains of a Neolithic house, archaeologists think that the square may commemorate and monumentalise the ancestral house of the first people to live at Avebury and may thus explain why the Avebury complex was created.

The Beatles Rule!

History is yesterday backwards, as we all know, and some of it is part of our own lives and thus we tend not to think of it as history. But as a Beatles fan in my late teens (Paul McCartney, since you ask) I was fascinated to read that a recent clear out of a store room at Southampton Students' Union radio station Surge Radio unearthed a BTR 3tape machine. This counts as rare for 2 reasons – only 2 dozen were ever made and this is the only known surviving example of this tape machine to be in full working order. And the Beatles connection? From the 1940s onwards this machine was the cornerstone of Abbey Road's studio, being the only stereo mix down machine in those studios for the whole of the 1960s and used for all their stereo recordings. It was also used for their first early twin track recordings, before they started using 4 track, from their first audition in 1962 until late 1963.

Surge Radio has now donated it to Abbey Road and lucky they are to have it too!

The most interesting camel in the world.

You may wonder how I can possibly consider a camel to be of interest to you archaeologists and historians, so this may well come as a surprise to you.

In April 1934 a Californian newspaper announced the death of the "last American camel". Topsy, for 'twas she, had died at the age of about 81 and had been shipped, probably from Egypt, to California in the



The arrival of the Camel Corps in Cape Verde, Texas (mural)

1850s when the US Army found that horses and mules couldn't hack the wildernesses west of Kansas and Nebraska, where they needed to build roads across to reach all of the western states. A military commander, one Josiah Harlan, had served in Afghanistan and knew the value of a form of transport that moved fast, stayed calm, carried heavy loads and needed very little maintenance – ie camels. About 6 dozen camels were shipped across in a retired US

navy ship, brushed daily and fed up with gallons of water and bushels of oats. None of this stopped the camels from eating the whitewash on their “stabling” walls! One of their handlers, a Lt. David Dixon, recorded that all the camels were obviously glad to be back on terra firma since they reared up, kicking, breaking their halters, crying out and generally behaving in a very exuberant manner.

They had landed on the Texan coast and on disembarkation they headed for their new barracks at Camp Verde near San Antonio. Their handlers were a mixture of Greeks, Turks and Arabs, specially hired from their own countries for their camel-handling skills. One Hadji Ali, nick-named Hi Jolly, would be with Topsy for several decades. On the journey from the coast to their new quarters the camels wreaked havoc, as they passed through small settlements, by eating the inhabitants carefully tended cactus hedges and spooking the local horses. They were allowed a few months in their new home to enjoy life before being put to work. Lt. Edward Beale was in charge of the road building programme and he selected a group of camels for the long job ahead – Topsy was one of them. They moved through Arizona with the job split into two: camels hauling supplies and tools, humans rocks and brush to create a continuous 10foot swathe, known as the Military Wagon Road and in fact the forerunner of the western part of the famous Route 66.

So impressed were the military authorities with the speed and endurance of the camels they were convinced that they’d found a new superior weapon. However things took a turn with the start of the Civil War and the project was abandoned.

The Camel Corps was broken up and some of the animals were captured by the Confederate army who used them for entertainment purposes – “to ride the pretty girls around” apparently. Others were set free and lived out their lives in the deserts of the south west, mystifying cowboys and frightening cattle. One, Old Douglas by name, was adopted by a southern regiment and killed by Union soldiers at the battle of Vicksburg, much to the horror of one observer. Early in 1864 the California camels were auctioned by the government and it’s possible that Topsy set out with Hi Jolly and a few other camels to a ranch in Nevada, where they hauled salt and firewood at the Comstock Lode silver mines. Nevada soon outlawed the use of camels

on highways, citing their tendency to spook horses, so this herd was moved to Arizona to carry out similar work.

However early settlers and locals were more than willing to part with cash for the chance to see “prehistoric animals with gangling limbs and long arched necks” so Topsy joined the Ringling Bros. Circus, marching in street parades, and also got on-screen work for the Fox Film Corporation, useful no doubt in some of those desert romances! Tragically Topsy was injured badly in a train accident on her way to a showbiz gig, injuring both her humps, and losing her mate in the incident. As a result she spent her last years in Griffith Park Zoo, Los Angeles, where she became their most popular resident in the 1920s and 30s. It was recorded that she shared an enclosure with 2 whippersnapper camels, aged 6 and 7, but her injuries worsened and in 1934 at the age roughly of 81 she was put to sleep, cremated and her ashes buried alongside her old friend Hi Jolly in Quartzsite, Arizona. The zoo has long ago been abandoned, many of Fox’s early films were destroyed in a fire, and Route 66 was officially removed from the US Highway System in 1985, but there’s no way one could forget about Topsy and her kin. I promise you this is all true!

The oldest wine in the world?

We all know that mankind has a weakness for a drop of vino but few of us will have wondered as to when this fondness began. Archaeologists have found traces of the delicious drink at the bottom of a terracotta jar in a Sicilian cave. They have been able to date it – though don’t ask me how – to about 6,000 years ago. Tartaric acid and its salt were identified and that is how they knew the residue was wine: cream of tartar (the salt of tartaric acid) develops naturally during wine-making so that confirms that the jar contained the gorgeous drink. This finding,



A Neolithic jar, possibly a qvevri, used for fermenting wine, on display at the Georgian National Museum

hardly surprisingly, filled the historian / wine-making experts in Sicily “with joy”. All we need to establish now is how long we have to wait before wine is at its best – 6,000 years maybe?

Or is this the oldest wine in the world?

Just as I was putting the final touches to this newsletter (Dick writes) the Guardian had another story about ancient wine. This time excavations in Georgia have discovered wine traces on clay pottery from 6000 BC (2000 years before the Sicilian material). The pottery was found during excavations near Tbilisi in the Southern Caucasus region, along with circular mud-brick house, tools of stone and bone and farming of cattle, pigs, wheat and barley. The pottery was some of the earliest fired pottery in the Near East, and a jar found in a nearby settlement was almost a metre tall and could hold 300 litres.

The Origins of Homo Sapiens

Most scientists believe that the common ancestors of mankind were Neanderthals and Denisovans living between 765,000 and 550,000 years ago, whilst homo sapiens is considered to be only around 300,000 years old. The latter evolved in Africa but it’s also believed that they didn’t leave that continent till around 70,000 years ago. So the interesting question is “why didn’t they leave Africa earlier?” Newly discovered DNA from fossils now indicates that a wave of early homo sapiens DID leave Africa for Europe where they interbred with Neanderthals. Fossils of those ancestors have been found in Spain as well as southern Siberia though the Neanderthal species vanished from the fossil record 40,000 years ago. We all know that many humans all round the world still carry Neanderthal DNA and in some people it’s more noticeable than in others!

This is a complex subject so you might be interested to read more fully about it. There is an overview at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/04/science/neanderthals-dna-homo-sapiens-human-evolution.html>

New Year Party

We have managed to enjoy our greatly successful New Year's party with an excellent spread of food for many years and most of you know how it all works, but for new members here are some hopefully helpful notes! We start with entertainment in the lecture room – the subject is a closely guarded secret, but has ranged from a folk singer, a history of Punch and Judy and a play about Winchester sewage! Afterwards we move to the education room where we mingle and eat and drink. We provide drinks, glasses, plates, cutlery and napkins, and ask you to bring some food on a serving dish.

The vast majority of food consumed will be savoury – after Christmas and the New Year no-one seems to want too much pud or sweet things – and everything needs to be bite-sized pieces, pre-cut by their provider, please. Vol-au-vents, small sandwiches, cocktail sausages, tiny scotch eggs, small sausage rolls, bite-sized pizza and quiche, and chicken drumsticks are all popular, as are cheese chunks (any variety) and small pieces of fruit and vegetables. Sticks of carrot, celery and cucumber with cherry tomatoes and radishes are popular, with a few well-drained olives. A few grapes can round off a meal very nicely! Dips such as tzatziki and humous are NOT popular – too difficult to eat on a flat cardboard plate, and those and sweet things get routinely thrown away at the end of the evening. Small pieces of baquette go down well but not savoury biscuits – too dry, I think. Salads without lettuce are popular – so rice, pasta or bean-based as well as coleslaw and potato salad.

Some foods will need to be labelled. Please do NOT bring food for more than 2 people – virtually everyone brings something and there is usually masses to throw away at the end of the party.

Final reminder that we ask for £2 from everyone who attends to cover the extra hire cost. If you're planning on coming, please let Julia know at least a week in advance so that she will have a rough idea of numbers and who's bringing what.

WARG Calendar

2017

Dec 11th **Bianca Taubert:** “Les Tomettes” – women soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force 1917 – 21

2018

Jan 8th **New Year party:** See notes opposite

Feb 12th **Alex Lewis:** Feet, hooves & wheels – a history of the king’s highway

Mar 12th **Frank Green:** New Forest Archaeology Update

Apr 9th **Big Dig 2017** Update

Apr 23rd **Day visit** to Bradford-on-Avon

May 14th **Colin Van Geffen:** Lawrence of Arabia

June tba

July 9th tba

Aug **Big Dig**

Sept 10th **Andy Russel:** 80 Years of Southampton’s Archaeology

Sept 24th **Day visit** to Dorchester, Dorset

Oct 8th **Martin Parsons:** Closing the Circle

Nov 12th **Alan Turton:** Castles of Wessex

Dec 10th **Jane Potter:** Wilfred Owen

Meetings are normally in the Hampshire Record Office cinema, starting at 7.30. As the cinema has a maximum capacity of 80, we are unable to allow in anyone who is not a member.

Archaeology Leisure Course

Now at Thornden School, Chandlers Ford.

For the past few years Barton Peveril College have run an Archaeology leisure course as part of their Adult Learning offering and I was the lecturer. The decision was taken by Barton Peveril that they will no longer offer Adult Learning so in July 2017 the course was closed. Due to pressure from the students who approached other local colleges and schools in order to have the course resurrected, Eastleigh College Adult and Community Learning agreed to take it on and run the course from their satellite site at Thornden School, Chandlers Ford. The course started on 27th September 2017 with me again as the lecturer and there is a plan in place for this year to teach Practical Archaeology, Marine/Maritime Archaeology and Osteoarchaeology/Origins of Man. The course is participation certificated but with no tests or exams and is at a pace set by the students. Enquiries to Eastleigh College.

Stephen Old



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