



# Newsletter

Summer 2013

❁ News ❁ Meeting Reports ❁ Diary Dates ❁  
❁ Travellers Tales ❁

# Contents

Chairman's notes .....	3
2013/14 Calendar .....	4
Avebury Stone Circle and Manor House.....	5
The Archaeology of Bow Hill, Sussex .....	8
The Mid-Victorian Professions.....	11
A Walk Around Alresford.....	13
Julia's Jottings .....	16
WARG Committee Members.....	20



**T**he 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](mailto:membership@warg.org.uk) or visit [www.warg.org.uk](http://www.warg.org.uk)

## Chairman's notes

I am writing this on the hottest day of the year - so far – and hoping that the weather will be good for our big dig this year in August and September. It is a great privilege to be able to dig on the bowling green at St Cross, and we are grateful to the trustees of St Cross for allowing us to do so. We are also very grateful to the Hospital Architect, Louise Bainbridge, and the new Clerk to the Trustees, Catriona Morley, both of whom have been exceedingly helpful and positive. Details are on the dig application form with this issue of the newsletter. This year we are looking for volunteers not just for digging and finds processing but for other tasks as well. Have a look at the form and see if you can help, but if you are not volunteering, please come down on the open day, September 1st, between 10.00 and 16.00.

As part of the run-up to the dig, we were at the St Cross fete, spreading the word, on June 29th. Techer, Julia and I spoke to a very varied cross section of people, even some who were just waiting for ice-creams from the van next to us, and we gave out lots of WARG application forms and fliers for the dig open day. The weather was good, and while the wind threatened the gazebo and the panels, at least it kept us cool.

### **Winchester Excavations Committee**

You will see a plea on the back cover for information about people who dug on the huge Winchester projects in the 1960s and early 70s. WARG is represented on the Winchester Excavation Committee, and we also provide a grant every year to push forward the publication of more of the massive volumes of Winchester Studies. You might want to look at the web site (<http://winchesterstudies.org.uk/>) and consider becoming a Friend of Winchester Studies.

### **Travellers Tales**

While you are on your holidays this year, please think about dropping a note to me for the newsletter when you return. I know a lot of people enjoy reading about other people's adventures, and, in some cases, have even been inspired to take the same holiday. We need a few hundred words and, ideally, a picture or two from your digital camera or phone.

Even if you don't write up your holiday for us, do have a good time and see you in the autumn.

*Dick Selwood*

# 2013/14 Calendar

Aug 24<sup>th</sup> - Sept 7<sup>th</sup> **Big Dig:** At St Cross

Sept 1<sup>st</sup> **Big Dig Open Day**

Sept 9<sup>th</sup> **A Mesolithic Boatyard at Bouldner Cliff:** The long-continuing work on the Solent shore line by the Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology uncovered this boatyard.

Sept 16<sup>th</sup> **Old Portsmouth & the Mary Rose Museum:** Leader, Don Bryan. Application form in this Newsletter.

Oct 14<sup>th</sup> **The Roman Army: Fact & Fiction:** John Smith, an educational archaeologist, has 20 years' experience in studying what a legionary wore and used. This will be preceded by the **AGM**.

Nov 11<sup>th</sup> **The WW2 Evacuation from Belfast - a tale of intransigence and prevarication:** Martin Parsons (University of Reading) follows on from his previous talk about childhood evacuation.

Dec 9<sup>th</sup> **Leprosy Evidence at St Mary Magdalene:** Dr Katie Tucker, of the University of Winchester, is a bone expert and worked at all the recent digs up the road at Henri de Blois' leper hospital

## 2014

Jan 13<sup>th</sup> **Social Evening** with Entertainment

Feb 10<sup>th</sup> Terry Hemming: subject tba

Mar 10<sup>th</sup> **Conspiracy of Secrets:** Bobbie Neate will speak about her family's connection with the illegitimate son of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith.

Apr 14<sup>th</sup> **Big Dig 2013:** Report on the search for the early buildings at St Cross

May 12<sup>th</sup> Michael Nelles: subject tba

June 9<sup>th</sup> **Local walk** tba

July 14<sup>th</sup> **A visit** tba

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# Avebury Stone Circle and Manor House

Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013, turned out to be dry with not a drop of rain!! Is Don Bryan losing his touch?

The Wiltshire landscape is covered in every direction with evidence of early man. The story begins with the causewayed enclosure at **Windmill Hill**, constructed around 3700-3500BC and a possible meeting/trading place for the Neolithic. A pot found here has proved to be one of the earliest in Britain and is named as "Windmill Hill ware." But, near the River Kennet, there is evidence of Mesolithic man as flints from 6000BC have been found.

**West Kennet long barrow** was built between 3700-3600BC for the burial of the dead, human remains being found in all five chambers of the barrow.

**The Sanctuary**, originally a timber structure, was built around 2500BC. Later this was changed to a double stone circle, possibly used as a shrine for five thousand years and of great importance as it was linked to the Avebury henge by an avenue of stones.

**Silbury Hill**, created around 2400BC, is the largest manmade mound in Europe. There are twelve piles of river gravel at the base with soil and turf on top, then a capping of chalk, but the hill does not contain any burials so what was it for? One idea maintains that it was constructed to "reach the sky."



*West Kennet Avenue  
(Val Pegg)*



*Silbury Hill (Val Pegg)*

**The West Kennet Avenue** was partially reconstructed by Alexander Keiller between 1937 and 1939: he located buried stones and fallen stones which he re-erected, or the sockets of missing stones which he indicated with marker stones. This Avenue consists of 100 pairs of stones which link the old Sanctuary and the newer Avebury henge. The theory goes that the stones are arranged in pairs, a tall phallic male stone with a shorter fatter female!



*Male and female stones? (Val Pegg)*

the henge stood two inner circles of large stones, within those in turn were a circle of stones surrounding three huge blocks (northern) and a rectangle of chest-high stones with a tall pillar in the middle (southern circle). Silbury Hill and the West Kennet long barrow can be seen from the henge, so the site was of great significance.

**Why was Avebury built?** For celebrating important times in the year, for marking significant moments in peoples' lives, to mark death, to contact ancestors, could these two inner circles be linked to the solar and lunar calendars? No-one really knows. The miracle being that all this was created with the use of antler picks, the scapula of oxen and the sheer physical force of Neolithic man.

The whole site raises more questions than it answers. Why are the burials only of juvenile boys? There is a lack of Neolithic habitation sites so where did they live? Who was in charge and directed the build? Are there any more circles to the east to be excavated? In the north east quadrant the shadow from the largest stone at the midwinter sunrise reaches right across the field to another large stone, how was this alignment achieved?

In later times came the **Romans**, the A4 being a Roman road with the settlement site beyond.

The **Saxons** built a church in the 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. **Avebury Priory** was established in 1114 and there were many disputes between Cirencester Abbey and Avebury Priory over church



*Avebury Church (Val Pegg)*

services and tithes. Two monks lived here owning two beds, a table, a missal and a chess set! They farmed 750 sheep (with hired help) and the Prior had a horse.

**Destruction** of the site began to occur, by the 14<sup>th</sup> century the stones were being reused, in the 1600s people living here used the stones as part of their dwellings (the blacksmith) but by the 18<sup>th</sup> century the village was virtually empty. The oldest house in the present village was the coffin maker's house whilst the Red Lion public house was built round the village well.

The first written description of the manor dates from 1548. **Avebury Manor House** has housed famous residents over the years, including the Tudor Auditor of the London Mint, Queen Anne's Master of Chancery and the Georgian Governor of Jamaica (who installed the Palladian decor.) Restoration enthusiasts worked on the house in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Vita Sackville-West wanted to live here but it was bought in 1935 by Alexander Keiller, of the marmalade family. Keiller was also an archaeologist and excavated the site during the 1930s. He eventually sold the ancient site and Manor House in 1942 to the National Trust.

In 2011 Avebury Manor House was the subject of a joint **National Trust and BBC** enterprise with nine of the rooms being restored to their former use and appearance during various periods in the history of the house, the programme was called "To the Manor Reborn." The most exciting part was being able to open drawers, sit on chairs, lie on beds and actually experience a hands-on approach to a National Trust property without stern room guides reprimanding us. In fact we were actually encouraged to touch and handle objects! This has proved such a success that the Trust are thinking of introducing the idea into other properties.

Visiting the Keiller museum, the exhibition in the barn, the church of St James and the dovecot rounded off a really interesting day and the usual thanks go to Julia for organising the visit and to Don for his guiding....and...even better...no rain!!



*Avebury Dovecot (Val Pegg)*

*Valerie Pegg*

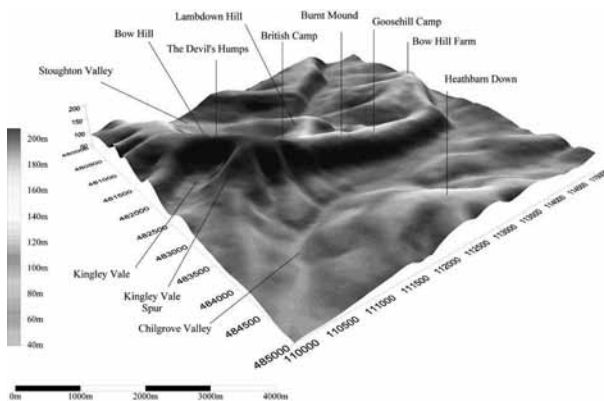
# The Archaeology of Bow Hill, Sussex

At the end of Mark Roberts's talk in December 2012 on the landscape of Sussex's Bow Hill, I said that we had been treated to a masterclass in Landscape Archaeology. These were not exaggerated words – there are many in WARG's ranks who, through the study of various subjects about a place, be it geology, geography, history, archaeology or its folk culture, seek to derive a deeper understanding of, almost a feel for, a piece of land.

We were privileged, therefore, to be presented with such a deeper understanding of this rather spectacular area in West Sussex, Bow Hill by name, which displayed a history which could be traced from its tundra landscape during the Ice Age, when (now dry) valleys were carved by surface water, possibly running off the ends of glaciers and unable to permeate through the frozen chalk. Post-glacial manipulation by Palaeolithic, Neolithic and finally modern man had left a palimpsest which was an ideal training ground for undergraduates in Archaeology.

Bow Hill was the area where Mark provided his UCL undergraduates with training in synthesis, contextualising many disciplines into a view of Man's interaction with the landscape.

With a north-south trend, in itself unusual with valleys either side of it showing the action of an Ice Age watercourse, with the corrie-like Kingley Vale on its southern edge, its name reflects its shape from above. The highest point is 206m and most of Mark's work is on



*Bow hill schematic*

monuments that lie above 150m. Indeed the hill is more upstanding than the nearby Trundle and visible from many different directions and angles. Monuments on the hill would have been visible from afar and likely to have made the hill a "special place" – as indeed the hill remains today. People travel to it to experience - what? The view? The fresh air? To climb on the lumps and bumps recognising them for what they are?



Mark went on to start describing those lumps and bumps and some of the relationships between them and the landscape. The top of the hill is capped with clay-with-flints, a water retaining stratum derived from glacial outwash deposits, where many special sites can be found throughout southern England.

## **The Project**

The methodology of Mark's work in the landscape was multi-disciplinary, starting off with the documented record, maps of features, trackways (such as Sussex sunken bostals), watercourses and geology. Tithe maps give clues to the produce, therefore the land use of the downs, with sheep on high ground and arable land in the valley bottoms. Such patterns were most likely as true in the Bronze Age as they are now.

Much of Bow Hill is characterised by ritual sites with Bronze Age barrows being obvious, but also long barrows on nearby hills, a Roman Temple (coin-dated AD 50-370), and supposed Bronze or Iron Age settlement enclosures.

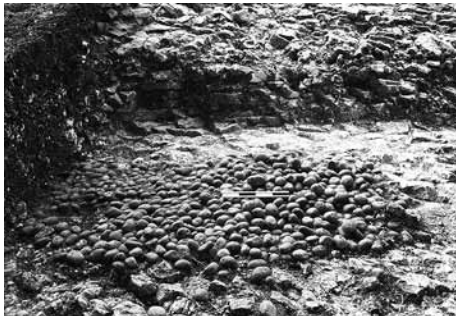
Cross dykes, a feature of the South Downs, protect movement along the top of the hill between designated areas. Barrows and other features are also found around the hill, together with Roman occupation and Medieval field boundaries - the area has been the centre of occupation for millennia.

Undergraduate projects glean information from all sources – the HER, tithe maps (which indicate land use of sheep grazing on the hill, more arable in the valleys) – but also includes theoretical approaches such as Chris Tilley's Phenomenology, exploring views from a subjective and emotional response. Mark illustrated with a word picture of how settlements on the hill might sound and smell in the Iron Age. A quiet wood underfoot, with all the woodland litter cleared to fuel fires, and the smell of woodsmoke permeating the air. The monuments themselves, with bright white barrows on the skyline, totem poles and peoples' recreation of fireside talk and crafts interspersed with more warlike pursuits of weapons practise and hunting.

## **The Sites**

The project was also about archaeological field technique, of course, and a number of specific sites had been examined.

Goosehill Camp on the northern end of Bow Hill, though unusually on an east-facing slope, perhaps the chalk slopes were better drained than the clay-with-flints on the top. Ditches revealed Iron Age settlement material dated 500-300BC and were defensive V-shaped



*Slingshot?*

with “ankle-breaker” bottoms. Hut platforms with post holes confirm the settlement nature of the site, but a cache of pebbles, possibly sling shot but with no other “warfare” evidence could just as easily have been a device for counting stock? So was this a defensive structure, or a stock management enclosure for herds or flock moving around the countryside,

a place for drovers to meet?

The most notable monuments are the Devil’s Humps, the Bronze Age round barrows on the top of the ridge. Excavated in 1853 and 1933, burials and pottery were found in the sides of the features. The barrows were an exercise in surveying and modelling. While one of the barrows has a concrete block built into it as part of Kingley Vale rifle butts, nowadays the main threat is the destruction being wrought by (mainly) mountain bikes.

The Roman Temple is a feature which when originally excavated, produced only coins. Now it is targeted by metal detectorists in search of ritual items – in reality there is now very little of it left.

The so-called “British Camp” on the other hand is a large, regular enclosure with a magnificent view over Kingley Vale.

Nearby in 2010 the project came across a rare Bronze Age burnt mount, its unusual shape established by surveying. Indicative of major cooking sites, they are not normally found on chalk, but here charcoal, carbon dated to 1500BC, and burnt flint was found in profusion.

Mark continues to train students in his home county, and soon hopes to move his attention east to another area on the South Downs, particularly that crowned by Heyshott Down and the barrow cemeteries there. We hope he will return to further enlighten us about that too.



*[Devil’s Humps]*

*Chris Sellen*

# The Mid-Victorian Professions

This is the title of a study being carried out at the University of Oxford by Michael Moss in collaboration with Laurence Brockliss and Simon Dixon and was the subject of the final talk of the WARG winter season. Michael was formerly Archivist at the University of Glasgow, as well as being an historian.

Michael explained that the subject of the professions is particularly relevant as a result of the strong anti-professional rhetoric voiced by Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair who took the view that the professions represented the antithesis of the entrepreneurial society. However, the pendulum is now swinging towards the belief that a return to 19<sup>th</sup> century professional practice would be a good thing.

The project was inspired by an approach from someone who had discovered his grandfather's CV as an Army surgeon during the Crimean War. It allowed the researchers to study the educational experience of an Army doctor, revealing that they moved between different Universities to learn the various aspects of the work. This is known as the Peregrinata. Many of these men came from disadvantaged backgrounds, as they could not afford the high fees needed to train for other professions. Their success meant that their children were able to move into other professions if they chose, allowing upward mobility.

## **Army Officers**

Army officers were often discounted as members of the professional class in the mistaken belief that they were all sons of the gentry, and by definition, thick. This was not true, they were frequently the sons of grocers or shopkeepers, they had to pass exams in order to join the service, and often needed to speak foreign languages.

Professional nurses did not practise until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century so the main female professional group were teachers, emerging in the 1840s and '50s.

The 1851 Census defined the categories of professions used in the study and further information was gained from Henry Bryerley Thompson's 1857 book "A Concise Review of the English Professions". There is a wealth of further sources to draw on including The Genealogist, Family Search, Google, The National Archive and Hampshire Archives and Local Studies. The internet has made the job so much easier.

It was decided to focus on a representative sample of nine towns and cities: Winchester, Brighton, Leeds, Bristol, Alnwick/Morpeth,

Dundee, Greenock and Merthyr Tydfil. Pilot studies have been conducted in Winchester and Alnwick/Morpeth, mainly because they are county towns at opposite ends of the country. They have listed 56 individuals in Winchester and 28 in Alnwick/Morpeth. There were far more people in the professions in Winchester, mainly because of the presence of the Cathedral.

### **From further afield**

The study hopes to gain as much information as possible about family relationships; where does a husband come from? Where does his wife come from? What did the children do? There is also an interest in geographical migration. In the case of Winchester, quite a number of professionals came from further afield. Army officers were required to travel, as did the clergy, in order to find livings.

William John Wickham (1798 - 1864) was a distinguished army surgeon in Winchester. His father was also a surgeon, as was his uncle. A study has been made of Wickham's children and grandchildren, most of whom entered the professions and some of whom were surgeons. It was found that the sons of people in the higher professions nearly all had children who followed in their footsteps, although not necessarily in the same profession. Schoolmistresses and governesses frequently came from quite humble backgrounds and their descendants showed few signs of rising in status.

### **Wealth at death**

The study has also taken an interest in wealth at death. Lawyers - surprise, surprise - were at the top of the tree, followed by ministers of religion and doctors. Veterinary surgeons were right at the bottom. However, real social progression can be shown, as parents generally left far less when they died than their children did.

The list of 56 Winchester individuals was handed out, with a request for any known information about them and their families, to assist with further research. It would be interesting to know whether any WARG members might be able to contribute to this fascinating study of social history.

*Iris Gould*

**Editors Note:** *If you missed the talk, or if you want to hear a slightly different slant on the project, there is a wonderful talk on the National Archives' web site at <http://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/keeping-it-in-the-family-professional-dynasties-in-19th-century-england/>*

# A Walk Around Alresford

**A**llegedly the river running through Alresford is not the Arle, but the Itchen! The Saxon name was believed to translate as “a ford where the alder trees grow,” and the name of the town and the River Arle was derived from this. Recent research by a local historian has located the source of the Itchen as being in Water Lane, Ropley (not Cheriton), therefore the River Arle does not exist. The name of the town comes from King Ina of Wessex, who in 701AD gave land or *alder* with its ford or *vidum* to an *alderman*, a Saxon chief; the word being corrupted over time.

## Old Alresford Pond

Henri de Blois built a palace at Bishops Sutton and started the Novum Forum (New Town) at Alresford. In 1189 Bishop de Lucy completed the projects and built the Great Weir, creating a fish pond and a head of water to drive the many corn and fulling mills to be built downstream. The artificial reservoir was cleaned out in 1253 and restocked with roach, bream and pike. The Globe Pub is right by the pond, in the 1800s a local man left the pub by the wrong door and drowned. Near the pond is a commemorative tablet to Captain James Cogswell, USAF who saved Alresford from disaster by diverting the “Lady Luck,” his fully laden B17 Flying Fortress bomber, to the east. The gothic medieval Soke Bridge, built in 1190 by Godfrey de Lucy, is only visible from the private garden of Riverside House. Underneath the arch are recesses which supported the timber former and evidence of road widening can also be seen.



*Soke Bridge (Edwina Cole)*

## The Church of St John the Baptist and Medieval Layout

Mentioned in Domesday there has been a church here since Saxon times, there is a small Saxon rood, a sculpture of Christ, above the west door whilst the base of the tower is late Norman.

The town was laid out in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in a grid system with long narrow blocks all the same width and length and we were able to enter the private garden, in Mill Hill, of the oldest house in Alresford. Carpenter’s marks can be seen on the timbers and the house next door has a secret room in the roof. Uneven, continuous

rooflines in Broad Street also indicate the age of the properties.

## **Have you got Fire Insurance?**

Being a medieval town with wooden framed buildings, and the bolting house (flour sieving) in close proximity to the public ovens, Alresford has experienced seven devastating fires. These occurred in



*Broad Street (Edwina Cole)*

1160, 1440, 1620 and in 1644 after the Battle of Cheriton when the retreating Royalists set fire to houses in East Street. There were more in 1649, 1689 and 1736 when the brewery caught alight. The town fire pump used to be housed in the west porch of St. John's church with the water source far away so in 1881 the Fire Station in Broad Street was built. The alarm

was raised by a policeman who fired a rocket, whilst a second ran to get the brigade, but what happened where the rocket landed?!

## **The French Connection**

Napoleonic French officers and their wives, although prisoners-of-war, were housed in Alresford under parole with a curfew system. Four died from fever and their graves can be seen opposite the west door of the church. The prisoners created scrimshaw, carving bone into dominoes or putting ships into bottles. The vaulted cellar of The Swan Hotel is made of Tudor bricks, proof that the cellar survived the fires. There are hooks in the walls for the hammocks of French prisoners, who had broken their curfew, and were being held in "lock-up."

## **Agricultural and Industrial Alresford**

Broad Street would regularly bustle with market stalls. Hurdles for the annual sheep fair were stored at Hurdle House on Pound Hill. Bringing animals to market was thirsty work so Alresford originally had thirteen pubs and fourteen inns, wrought iron brackets above houses indicates their earlier function. Being on the main turnpike road to London coaching inns are prevalent, with their arched entrances to courtyards. Fourteen forges in the town ensured that blacksmiths could attend to the horses.

The location of the water wheel for the Town Mill can be seen in Mill Hill, further down at Little Weir was another corn mill and there were also fulling mills. The area around Ladywell Lane was

the “industrial hub,” since the Ladywell spring never ran dry, with tanning, fulling and a laundry. Both the miller and the town tanner owned large, expensive houses. The thatched, timber framed fulling mill which spans the river was built in the thirteenth century and used water-driven hammers to work raw cloth into a useable material.

The workhouse tenements, The Wickhams, are in Mill Hill and the overseer, William Wickham, lived next door at Wykeham House.

The railway came in 1865 and greatly assisted the developing watercress “poor man’s bread” industry as it allowed access to markets in London and beyond. A Birmingham lady who created the Watercress Company was earning £60,000 per annum on her death in 1927. Sadly, Beeching closed the line in the 1960s but it is now a major tourist attraction.

### **Famous People and a Dog**

Cromwell stayed in The Market Inn, now called The Bell. Mary Russell Mitford 1737-1855, author of “The Village,” lived in Broad Street but her father drank away all of her fortune.

The grave of Hambone Junior, canine friend of American soldiers billeted near Alresford, can be seen at the bottom of The Dean.

Sir Francis Lindley, a local benefactor, gave the area of the Memorial Garden (World War I and II) to the town in 1951. The site of the open air swimming pool is marked in bricks but this was closed in the 1960s to eradicate polio.

Harry Houghton used the Public Conveniences in Station Road as a “pigeon hole” for secret messages, which were collected by members of the Portland Spy Ring. In 1961 he was jailed for fifteen years.

John Arlott, the journalist and broadcaster, lived in The Old Sun Inn at the end of East Street for twenty years, the wine cellar was not destroyed by any of the fires.

Bob Champion, jockey, lived in Town Farm on Pound Hill.

Thanks to Julia (excellent organisation) and Don for a most interesting tour in the June evening sunshine and special thanks to the charming residents of Alresford who let us enter their private properties.

*Valerie Pegg*

Nick Perry, owner of Riverside House, wrote to Julia Sandison:

*Following your visit to my garden to see the Alresford Bridge, I would like to convey my thanks to WARG members who donated towards the Eel House Restoration Fund last evening. I made out a cheque for £26 under Gift Aid to the New Alresford Town Trust which manages the restoration.*

*Nick*

# The Wet and Windy Welsh Marches

Ever gluttons for punishment, Dick and I returned at the end of May to the area south of Shrewsbury where we'd stayed during the heavy rain and floods of last autumn. This time the weather god decided against surprising us with a change in his product, so donning wellies and clutching Pevsner and a brolly, we continued our exploration of the area with its many churches and castles. You must remember that this area is the Marches, the borderland between two constantly warring countries, so castles or their ruins abound. The remains of a late C11th / early C12th one dominate the small town of Clun in the south of Shropshire and the other end of the county preserves the very small remains of Oswestry's castle from Conquest times. Between them and around Shropshire generally are the remains of about 50 castles, mottes or baileys. Burial mounds and stone circles also abound, and linear earthworks such as Offa's Dyke contribute to the ancient character of this county.

Roman remains are less frequent, with Wroxeter being the best known and largest, though I found it disappointingly small in comparison with my expectations! Ancient Ecclesiastical buildings play their part and my particular favourite is Wenlock Priory, though there are of course many churches dating from Norman times. Village churches around England are a source of great joy to me and we searched out Ratlinghope Church in order to find the grave of the last known "sin-eater" in the UK. This man, who died in 1906, was actually a local farmer who lost 4 small children within a matter of weeks and performed the sin-eating ritual over their little bodies. This ancient ritual was usually the "job" of a local tramp and was prevalent in the Border area as well as in Appalachia in America.

As always Hill-forts are the best places to visit to gain breathtaking 360 degree views, and the one at Old Oswestry is no exception. The one great thing about a lot of rain is that Dick and I are nearly always the only people at any rural site we visit and this Hill-fort was no exception. May is a glorious time of year in the countryside and the mixture of rain and sun had provided a lush one for us to potter about.

Shropshire is a glorious county with extremes of landscape – vast tracts of moorland as well as the delightful "traditional" countryside of many hills, small fields, hedgerows and woodland. Why not consider a visit – even a long weekend can be fun and rewarding and



not madly expensive. When you do, don't forget to visit Ludlow, the acknowledged food capital of England. It has a castle, a fantastic church, several glorious black and white timber buildings, a street market every day of the week, and, just outside the town, a Food Centre which can seriously damage your wallet!

And for those who know about these things, we saw a red-backed shrike!

*Julia Sandison*

## Julia's Jottings

### **A Watery Grave**

As we've read over the last few years, the majority of recent historical discoveries in the UK have been by metal detectorists – with the notable exception of a king in a car park (sorry, car park). However one of the most intriguing is the uncovering of 8 Bronze Age boats in the Fens. On the outskirts of Peterborough a quarry has produced these wonderful finds, one of which is almost 30 foot long. Interestingly these boats appear to have been deliberately sunk over 3000 years ago and one is elaborately carved with decorations. How does the team from the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Unit know the boats were deliberately sunk? Because the transoms (the boards at the non-pointy end of a boat, for we ignorami) had been removed. Several of the boats had been repaired and one had oak lifting handles.

They mostly show signs of long use and of course no-one will ever know why they were sunk. Fortunately for us though, they were and we have found a part of our history which is as fabulous – if not more so – as any gold hoard.

### **And Yet It Stands.**

At a most informative talk by the Cathedral Architect Nick Cox I recently learned all about what is being undertaken in the way of restoration / repair work at the Cathedral. The lead roof on the Presbytery is leaking due to the fact that lead "droops" after time, pulling on the nails and finally falling from the roof. Lead can also become weak due to folds when it droops, so that section of roof is being overhauled. The south transept is undergoing an enormous re-arrangement, with the removal of the old loos, the choir's music room being re-jigged so that the sheet music can be stored other than in boxes on top of cupboards, the stained glass and its lead in the

clerestory needs urgent restoration due to decades of “weather”, the Winchester Bible will have a display room of its own due to partition walls being scrapped, and there’s to be a new entrance to Morley Library. A mezzanine floor will be inserted in the Triforium Gallery so that there will be much more space. Once restored, the stained glass will be protected by a huge sheet of glass covering the window outside – something I’ve seen elsewhere on churches around the country.

At the same time as all this, Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI – a form of laser camera measuring and drawing the inside of a building, but do look it up on the computer!) is being used both in the Cathedral, the Undercroft and Pilgrim’s Hall to show what subsidence is occurring. Various parts of the Cathedral are sinking – not altogether a surprise considering it was built on a small marshy island nearly a thousand years ago – as is the Undercroft, and what this method of “surveying” is revealing is not visible to the human eye. This means that measures can be taken to correct any problems before they really become one!

Another thing that RTI provides is pictures of long faded graffiti and drawings – again, no longer visible to the naked eye – and always a source of interest to most people!

### **More and More and More**

**D**ozens of archaeologists working in waterlogged trenches in the City of London during what was the wettest summer and coldest winter have found it all worthwhile by uncovering literally thousands of objects from the Roman occupants. Items as diverse as writing tablets, amber, pewter, coins, pottery, stitched leather and the largest ever collection of lucky charm phalluses have been found in the soggy conditions left by the Walbrook stream under the city. Also many layers of timber from the buildings containing personal items, clothes and even documents have been brought to the surface.

This is wonderful stuff for the historians and conservationists, and will undoubtedly increase and transform our knowledge of how people lived in those far-off times – hopefully some of the finds will be displayed for us to see in the future. This is a really important excavation and the costs involved have been more than vindicated!

### **The Old Helping the New**

**I**t’s always fascinating to know how Times Past can directly help us in our supposedly more enlightened times. A research project at the University of Surrey is using the bones from the St Mary Magdalen Leper Hospital, on the outskirts of Winchester, in understanding the disease of Leprosy

which died out in this country in Medieval times but still lingers on in other parts of the world. There are currently 11 different strains of the disease and little is known about how and where it first emerged.

As you all know, Simon Roffey and colleagues from the University of Winchester have been digging this fantastic site for 6 years now, and are currently uncovering traces of occupation pre-dating the founding of Henri de Blois' Leper colony. This site was used almost without break until the First World War when it was a huge military camp complete with cinema.

The lead scientist from Surrey and his team are hoping that DNA samples from the bones, covered by a waxy coat preventing further degradation, will also help with research into TB. Bones are also being used from skeletons found in Sweden and Denmark.

It's amazing to think that finds from a large field at Winchester can still help humanity in the 21st century!

### **Treasures indeed**

**W**hilst archaeologists and metal detectorists continue to uncover various fascinating aspects of our island's past, they also race against time in many cases to reveal and preserve that of other countries. In Afghanistan, a country having had more than its fair share of trouble over the last few decades, a race to save whatever's possible of a large Buddhist city lasting from C1st BC to about C10th AD on the Silk Road goes ahead. During these last few decades, the uncovering and destruction by the Russians, the Taliban, al-Qaida, the US forces and professional art looters have created huge damage, but it has now been revealed that the city was surrounded by 19 separate archaeological sites, be they fortified monasteries, forts, temples or ancient workshops. The need for haste is because the mountain on which they all stand is the world's largest-known source of copper – probably why the city was built there in the first place – and has been bought by China, the fastest and most aggressively-growing country in the world today. Afghanistan, one of the world's poorest nations, also has large deposits of oil, gas, iron, gold and lithium – all needed by China for the expansion of its economy and thus likely to be required within the next few years, probably occasioning further destruction of incredible ancient sites.

The statues, coins, jewellery, amphorae, fragments of geometric decoration and wall paintings all point to this city near Mes Aynak having been a huge and wealthy one, and are an excellent reminder to today's world that once Afghanistan was the centre of classical globalisation.

## Looking for old Diggers

In the 1960s and 1970s, under the direction of Martin Biddle, Winchester was alive with excavations. Were you one of the diggers? Or were you a host family? The Winchester Excavations Committee is assembling a list of all those who dug, but after 50 years it is finding it difficult to track everyone down. If you have any current contact details, please send them, together with the years they/you dug, to Clare Chapman ([friends@winchesterstudies.org.uk](mailto:friends@winchesterstudies.org.uk)) who is undertaking the marathon task of trying to reach as many as possible.

Even if you were not a digger, you might want to join the Friends of Winchester Studies. This is an organisation around the Winchester Excavation Committee, with the aim of providing support to get the remaining volumes of the studies published. Have a look at <http://winchesterstudies.org.uk/support-us/>



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