

Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society

THE ACTIVE ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

The Group has around 32 members – some more active than others

After the summer break, the winter programme of talks and meetings will resume in September, and will include talks about some of our summer activities. Details are in this newsletter and on the BAS website.

We do not yet run our own excavations – we lack a professional archaeologist, though we do have several experienced amateurs. This does, however, give us the freedom to go and help anywhere around the county (and sometimes beyond), wherever we are asked and can be useful. Consequently we may be found in twos and threes in different places. We have been likened to a 'Flying Squad'! Keeping track of what everyone is doing is not always easy, and this report is not necessarily exhaustive (apologies to anyone I have left out)

Hogshaw Deserted Medieval Village and Knights Hospitallers Site

We have now completed the earthworks survey for this site. Kris Lockyear from UCL performed a magnetometry survey of a large part of the site; and he and the Chess Valley group also did some resistivity work. We are very grateful for this help, and the loan of their equipment.



The results were interesting – the so-called Bowling Green – actually a fairly small flat platform surrounded by a mostly dry moat – showed very little evidence of any buildings; but an area close to the road showed what might be a garden feature, with paths dividing it into sections. We are hoping that Kris will be able to come back and complete some of the areas not yet covered, and possibly see if different techniques will clarify things. In the meantime, Peter Marsden is beavering away trying to make a good enough case for EH to allow us to put in a trench to further investigate.

We visited the St John's (Knights Hospitaller) museum in Clerkenwell, and as well as a very interesting tour of the museum and church, we were able to look at some of their collection of documents. We plan to return to look at more documents, possibly in October.

Hillforts Survey

We have now completed our surveys of several of the hillforts in the area, and our findings have been reported to the Hillforts Atlas and/or the CCB Chilterns Hillforts Survey. The report on Wauluds Bank in Luton (by Nigel Wilson) has been passed on to various organisations within Luton, in the hope that the site can be tidied up

In connection with the Hillforts Survey two members visited the Halton Repository of the County Museum, and became involved in helping to sort the

human skeletal remains collection. They will be giving a talk for the group (see our programme of meetings for Autumn and Winter 2015-16).

Maids Moreton

The local Conservation Society invited us to visit the Maids Moreton Mound site. Six people took up the invitation, and as well as a tour of the site (which includes a house platform and much 12/13C pottery) they were regaled with tea and cake (reported to be excellent), and invited to return to help with the excavation. Five members did so, and we eagerly await the report of their findings (see our meetings programme).

Ashridge

Berkhamsted Archaeological Society have been excavating in the grounds of Ashridge House for several seasons, looking for the remains of the monastic church, and some of our members have been helping. There have been important finds, which may result in the area being scheduled. Again, see the meetings programme, when more will be revealed.

Wing

The very active Wing Heritage Group is in the third year of garden test pits to try and locate the Saxon village, as well as anything else about the origins of the village. It seems the Saxon village was probably near the Castle Mound (we have Saxo-Norman pottery from test pits in this area) We have now excavated over 30 test pits with a wide variety of findings, and still have about 10 to do.

As part of the CBA festival of Archaeology, the group had a stall at Wing Carnival, with information about the group and our findings so far, as well as a test pit in the carnival field that the public were allowed to have a go at. This was very successful. We could use more volunteers for the test pits – we rarely have enough to do more than one test pit in a day. We are also hoping to do some geophysics and some fieldwalking

Stowe Gardens

At the request of Gary Marshall, National Trust Archaeologist, five members of the group spent a day excavating a water feature at Stowe, trying to establish how it originally looked. It was a short but very steep descent to the feature, which got worse as the day went on, and was wet and muddy (well it was a water feature!) but hot bacon butties at lunchtime made it all worthwhile.

We must have done something right – Gary has now asked for a small group of us to help with a project at Cliveden in October, but details are not yet available

Whelpley Hill

The Chess Valley group have been excavating on this site for some time, and invited us to help, but no report is yet available.

St Albans/Verulamium

Some of the group had previously attended a one-week geophysics course run by Kris Lockyear at Verulamium Museum, and then helped with the survey of the part of the Roman town within Verulam Park (mostly magnetometry but some resistivity).

This year, Kris had been able to get permission to survey land close to the Roman theatre, across the road from the park. This is still within the Roman town wall, is scheduled, and belongs to the Earl of Verulam. Very little work has previously been done, and it was a considerable achievement to get permission.

Kris and a team of volunteers, including some AAG members, spent three weeks (apart from a few very wet days), doing magnetometry over an enormous and quite hilly field (it is over 27 hectares and we covered more than 17 of them). Kris had also obtained a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) machine, and quite a lot of the field was also covered with this – after we learned how to use it.

The results are stunning – they can be viewed on the Herts. Geosurvey website (<https://hertsgeosurvey.wordpress.com>)– there are outlines of previously unknown buildings so clear that you could measure the sizes of the rooms; streets lined with buildings and the relationship between some of the ditches is completely clear for the first time. The rest of the field, and another across the approach lane is due to be surveyed next year. We had to stop by the end of August, for the sake of the Earl's pheasants.

Hockliffe

The Leighton Buzzard group (LBDAS) were invited to investigate a site where metal detectorists found two Saxon shield bosses. We performed resistivity over almost the whole field, homed in on a promising area, and after obtaining the necessary licence (granted because the bodies with the shield bosses had clearly already been disturbed), we opened up a trench around 8x10m, and found not only the two expected bodies, but two more – one was female, the rest male. We found grave goods with three of them. More information will be available when the post excavation work has been completed

The 8th in the East

Martin Cuthbert, the archaeologist who was in charge of the Wing Project, is now working for 'The 8th in the East', recording the remains of World War II airfields in East Anglia used by American forces, and has asked the AAG and LBDAS to help with recording Cheddington Airfield. There are about 8 volunteers across the two groups, and Martin will shortly be arranging a training day so we know what is expected of us.

CBA Festival of Archaeology

Several members, led by Nigel Wilson, and reported elsewhere in this newsletter, had a stall in Aylesbury on 18th July as part of the Festival. This was organised at quite short notice after the last Council meeting, but was nevertheless successful.

Pauline Hey