



CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD GROUP

Newsletter Number 162

February 2011

www.cafg.net

President	Dr Paul Spoerry	Vice-President	Dr Sue Oosthuizen
Chairman	Barrie Fuller		
Secretary	Susan May, 94 High Street, Great Shelford, Cambridge, CB22 5EH, tel 01223 843121; email: caf.g.may@ntlworld.com		
Treasurer	Graham Vincent		

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday, 6th April at 7.30 pm in the seminar room at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Downing Street, Cambridge. The agenda will be sent to members shortly.

We particularly need more female committee members. Can you help? We normally have no more than 4 committee meetings a year. Nomination forms will be coming out with the agenda so please consider coming forward (or persuading someone else to).

LECTURES

The lecture programme continues at 7.30 pm on the first Wednesday in the month, in the seminar room at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Downing Street, Cambridge. Parking is available on site from Tennis Court Road.

2 March Sarah-Jane Harknett and Heather Donoghue from the Department of Archaeology will talk about the redevelopment of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and some of the objects intended to go on display. This will give us an opportunity to give feedback on the objects and influence some of the changes.

If you are unable to attend this talk, or want to supplement it, the Museum is holding a general focus group meeting on Thursday, 3rd March at 5.30pm for the same purpose, to be held in the back rooms at the Museum. To book, phone 01223 764769.

6 April	AGM and talk by our President, Dr Paul Spoerry
4 May	Prof Tony Legge on <i>What mean these bones?</i> (the interpretation of bones from British sites)
1 June	John MacGinnis on <i>Excavating a provincial capital of the Assyrian Empire</i> Also presentation of Val Whittaker Memorial Prize

DR JOHN ALEXANDER

A memorial service for Dr John Alexander, our president until his death in August 2010, was held at St John's College on 5th February 2011, at which the Group was represented. During the service, the following reading was given from "Rescue Archaeology", written by John in 1971. It encapsulates his views and deserves a wide audience:

"...the complete history of man in this country is only one of the many similar regional studies elsewhere. They should all be seen as part of an even grander study - the history of man in the world. Within the last twenty-five years this great project, to which far-seeing historians have always turned for inspiration, has become possible. This is so important a development that it must be made more widely known, for a study of the human past, which all races have in common, should be a unifying factor. Archaeologists all over the world accept common standards of evidence and common conclusions. This is a promising development for, down the perspective of two million years, the contributions and experience of all the continents can be seen to have made us what we are today."

We, as a Group, are starting to plan a lecture or lectures in John's memory.

BAR HILL PROCESSING EVENINGS

Processing continues at the Oxford Archaeology East HQ at 15 Trafalgar Way, Bar Hill on Wednesdays when there is no lecture. We meet from about 7.15 pm. A plan can be provided for those who have not been before.

Could you help with counting and listing the bone from the Wimpole excavations? Identification skills not needed. If so, please contact Mike Coles.

NEW WEBSITE

The new website will be online very shortly. A summary of decisions about it can be seen under *Committee Meetings*. Members will continue to receive emails about imminent events, but we hope you will use the website as a resource and give your feedback. There will be a "blogs" page, which all members will be able to use, for questions/answers or new information you want to share. You will need a log-in name and password – Peter Cornelissen will set these up for you on request.

There will also be a gallery where any member can upload photographs. However, care should be taken not to use unsuitable pictures, and any containing recognisable children must have their parents' consent.

FIELDWORK

We are currently fieldwalking in Toft. Meet in the layby on west side of the road between Toft and Hardwick at 10 am. Wear stout shoes or boots and clothing for all eventualities. We usually continue until around 12.30 p.m.

Mike Coles, the field officer, reports on fieldwork so far this season:

At the end of September 2010 we started to look at the fields of Bennell's Farm, Comberton. Colin Coates had spotted some crop marks on the fields to the north of the farm buildings using Google Earth and Terry Dymott organised access with the farmer Mr Tebbitt. The fields are on the north side of the Bourn river valley and slope up to the north. We spent ten Sunday mornings here, and on the 14th November, at the highest point, found a scatter of Roman pottery, the usual 2nd to 4th century wares. This site covers no more than 50m east to west and abuts a hedge on the north; we were unable to properly look at the field beyond as it was sown with oil seed rape. The small nature of the pottery spread suggests that this is an outlying Roman farmstead, perhaps related to the villa known at Comberton.

As an interlude from the heavy clay of West Cambridgeshire, we visited Burwell Fen on the 23rd January 2011. Here we looked at the spoil heaps of peat created as part of the management of the site by the National Trust. We were joined by seventeen members of the public, organised by Lois

Baker from NT Wicken Fen, for them to experience some practical archaeology. In the event, on a cold grey day, we found a small handful of Neolithic struck flint and a bone that was a bovine astragalus (ankle bone), perhaps of an Auroch. Thanks to the efforts of our members, the visitors had a good morning and we recovered a few finds.

Then back to the heavy clay, across the Toft- Hardwick road to Wood Barn Farm, again access organised by Terry Dymott. Six weeks later and we have few finds to report from these large open boulder clay fields. There was an area near the farm with 18th and 19th century pottery and Liz Tomkins found a superb circular fossil on a large piece of sandstone.

John Waterhouse and Stephen Reed have made great progress in working on record files from previous sites and we hope that we will be able to lodge copies of them all with the HER in the near future.

Hopefully the rest of the fieldwalking season will be more productive and rewarding.

Excavation 2011

Dates for your diary: 23rd July to 31st July and probably the weekend before, 16th and 17th July. This, as always, will be a group excavation in which all members are encouraged to participate whatever the level of skill, even if they can only manage to visit the site to see what is found, so please put it in your diary. This is part of CBA Festival of British Archaeology and, as in previous years, we are likely to be able to undertake an excavation at Wimpole for the National Trust. Terry Dymott and I will meet Angus Wainwright shortly to discuss last year's results and any proposal he may have for this year. *[According to the Wimpole Hall events leaflet they are holding their "Archaeology in Action!" weekend on the 30th and 31st July and expect to see us there.(Sec)]*

Thanks to Robert Skeen, Colin Coates and Emma Smith, and members at Bar Hill on Wednesday evenings, we have made progress in processing the finds from last year – at the last count we have recorded 3124 of all sorts.

WIMPOLE EXCAVATIONS 2010

On the 5th January Mike Coles shared more details of the results of the 2010 excavations at Wimpole, this time near Home Farm. The background was given in the November newsletter.

Further documentary research shows a group of 8-10 houses each in its own plot in the general area of what is now Home Farm, on the 1638 Hare Map, one of a number of little settlements on the Wimpole estate. Mr Stokes' house appears to be in the vicinity of the building uncovered. In 1794 Sir John Soane designed the new state-of-the art farm, including on the plan Mr Ratford's house, coloured grey so possibly to be removed. However, the corner of the new barn adjacent to the house and barns was cut in a diagonal, as if to accommodate them. The house seems likely to have gone by 1820 and the field has not been touched since its demolition.

Preliminary geophysics by RheeSearch showed a large disturbed area and an earthwork survey revealed some humps in the field, including a possible hollow-way or ditch. Parch marks appeared in a sub-rectangular pattern, but not extending as far as the hollow. There appears to have been a yard to the east of the house, in the angle between the house and its barns. Five trenches were placed where there were indications of changes.

Trench A, on the east of the site, was placed over the main wall, though this turned out not be a very solid wall. A cross wall was also present and it is thought that there may have been a doorway at this point.

Trench B, south of A, revealed a substantial brick wall just under the turf, possibly supporting a timber frame. There was little brick rubble.

Trench E in the south-east corner of the site established the brick corner of the building. Some stone roof tiles were found.

Trench C, on the south of the site, had more massive brick and clunch walls, which did not match the wall in trench E. The remains of what was likely to have been a large chimney were revealed, including a great lump of brickwork which had been tipped in. There had obviously been demolition and the brickwork may have extended higher, even to 2 storeys. The house might have been similar to Monument No. 30 at Comberton in the RCHM survey. Wall plaster was also present. There was also a possible later extension.

Trench D, in the north-west, had an outside wall and a cross wall not lining up with that in trench A. This trench had a white brick floor outside the main house, an extension clearly built against the old wall, probably not before 1800, and possibly a kitchen. Some blue painted wall plaster was found. This extension overlaid and butted up to a midden with apparently 18th century pot. The midden was therefore being used after the house was built, possibly as a work/kitchen area or a garden at some point. There were no finds outside the wall on the east face – possibly a path or yard. Deeper in the trench there was a layer of cobbles, small giving way to larger, but it was not possible to investigate below this layer.

The main house had red bricks, but was possibly timber framed above a plinth and the few stone roof tiles suggest that it might have been part tiled and part thatched. These red bricks suggest a construction date of 1650/60s, certainly not earlier than the 1640s, possibly after the Restoration of the monarchy, since the estate owner, Chicheley, was a Royalist and had been imprisoned several times. The lay-out of the walls suggests the house had one large room, 2 small ones and one more extending into the next field.

Most of the finds appear to be from the date of demolition, not construction, and there was no late Victorian nor 15th/16th century pottery. However, in trenches A, B and D, Medieval pottery of the 13th/14th centuries was found, and in trench B and possibly D, possible beam slots were discovered. The Medieval remains may be of Mr Stokes' house on the 1638 map.

Ratford/Radford is a fairly common name. A John Ratford died in 1795, leaving belongings to his wife but making no mention of a house. Could this have been his house? John had property in Bourn and in his will, proved in London, refers to a mahogany card table and a wainscott bureau. He was a carpenter and possibly also a smallholder. His wife died in 1806. It is known that there was a school in the area, and the discovery of slate styluses and a piece of slate with markings, makes one wonder if this was that school.

THE STAR-CROSSED STONE

On the 3rd November, Kenneth McNamara spoke on "The Star-crossed Stone: the Archaeology and Mythology of Fossil Sea Urchins". His interest in these fossils was sparked by learning of a Bronze Age grave of a girl and a baby found on Dunstable Downs, where more than 200 fossil sea urchins (or echinoids) were found surrounding the skeletons, but none in the other adjacent graves. He set about tracing the human use of these five-pointed burrowing creatures.

They have been found with the dead, in inhumations, cremations and remembrance barrows, and of use to the living in practical ways – jewellery or spindle whorls; or for spiritual purposes – lucky charms, warding off evil. Ken believes that people were attracted by the five-pointed star shape, possibly as a lucky omen, possibly by its aesthetics.

At Swanscombe an Acheulian (400,000yrs BP) hand axe with a fossil urchin has been found, some of the fossil edge being broken but the other side not worked, and there are examples from the Paleolithic and Mesolithic of the fossils being used. In the Neolithic they begin to be found associated with burials, usually one per person and sometimes incorporated into a tool, and this continues into the Bronze Age. From the Iron Age, two fossil sea urchins have been found with shapes on the underside similar to the hammer shape on representations of the god Thor: this hammer was a symbol of creation as well as destruction. The deposition of the fossils in graves continued into the Anglo-Saxon and Viking pre-Christian periods.

In the Near East the human use of fossil sea urchins has been found from the Neolithic onwards, including their incorporation into figurines and fossils worked to bring out the pattern; and carved hieroglyphs of 1700BC at Heliopolis state where the fossils had been found. There are many uses of the five pointed star in the Middle East.

In folklore the fossils have many names, such as shepherd's crowns, or fairy loves, a charm to make bread rise and milk not to go sour. They have also been used as amulets, kept by the front door or on a window sill up to modern times.

Anyone who missed this talk may like to catch up by attending Ken's talk with the same title at the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences on 16th March at 7pm as part of the Cambridge Science Festival (pre-book). He has also published a book called "The Star-Crossed Stone", published by the University of Chicago Press at £18.

LANGLEY ABBEY AND MEDIEVAL BROADLAND

On the 1st December Dr Paul Spoerry, having first stated that he was very happy to take on the post of President, which cemented the Group's relationship with Oxford Archaeology East, and hoped that it would be good for all, told us about research into Langley Abbey, by the River Yare on the Norfolk Broads. The owner of the Abbey wanted to repair it and turn it in to an attraction, and had asked the Unit to produce a display on the surviving west range.

The area lay on the edge of the Dogger land bridge in the Mesolithic and there are signs of prehistoric land use. In Roman times the Yare flowed into a wide estuary where Great Yarmouth now sits. Little of the Saxons has been found at Langley, although this was a wealthy part of the country. The Vikings had considerable influence, known from the number of freemen/sokemen and place names, including some along the Yare, which was possibly becoming less estuarine.

Langley became a town with a monastic house under the Normans. The estuary silted up and the spit of land formed on which Yarmouth was built. The landscape became productive and settled. Langley had a small parish church owned by the Abbey, which also held the manor. The village was sited to the south of the Yare and its wetlands, with the Abbey on the edge of the wetland and the church on high ground to the south. After the dissolution the Abbey became a quarry, partly for the adjacent big house, but the west range was eventually turned into a mechanised threshing barn. The current Abbey Farm was built in the 18th century, the previous house having burnt down.

The Abbey was a Premonstratensian house, canons not monks, although they lived in monasteries. It was built of flint and, although not much remains, the original layout can be reconstructed, partly as a result of excavations in the 1920s. It had the classic layout, with the church on the north side and the cloisters and Chapter House to its south.

Where the first church lay is now flat but part of the 12th century door has been used elsewhere and there are remains in the south-west corner of the nave and south aisle. The church was rebuilt in the 14th/15th centuries, with two new chapels and the tower. A new gatehouse was built at that time.

There was access over the Chapter House to the church, where there is a trefoil doorway not found elsewhere, and large windows to the Chapter house enabled lay brothers and servants to listen to proceedings. Over the cloisters was a possible first floor chapel and also a possible cistern.

The lavatorium was set into the wall of the west range, under a roof. Inside that range was a vaulted cellar (store) and public parlour on the ground floor, with upstairs likely to be lay brothers' accommodation: extant doorways provided access to lost buildings and stairs still exist. The abbot's quarters were also upstairs with the only access to the cellar being through them. There may have been a private chapel over the south aisle of the church, with a door from the abbot's chamber.

The North gate looked out onto the site of the market and the village grew up outside the Abbey, in tenements built by the Abbey. 400 items were found detecting in the market area. The Abbey had its own staithe and barns, fishponds and gardens and also owned various properties in Norfolk. By 1482 the number of canons was reduced to 17, several of whom had duties as priests of parishes.

At Ranworth Church there is an Antiphon which is likely to have been illustrated at Langley but Paul ended by quoting references to the behavior of the canons, which indicate that Langley was the most appallingly behaved of all Premonstratensian houses. He commended a visit to this fascinating building, about which it had been possible to discover so much.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Committee meetings were held on the 12th January and 9th February. That on the 12th January was specifically on the new website. Besides agreeing amendments to the draft pages, we agreed that:

- Any member of the committee may add/edit pages; other members of the Group may be authorised as necessary
- New/revised items must be approved by the controlling editor/s, Colin Coates and Robert Skeen before going live
- All members of the Group may add blogs: log-in names and passwords will be required
- All members should check blogs regularly
- A members' picture gallery will be available for any member to upload photographs

On the 9th February we agreed further amendments to the information on the website and that, when these had been incorporated, the new site should go live.

The treasurer then reported that the financial position was similar to that at the same time a year before, and the committee will therefore be recommending to the AGM that subscription levels remain the same. Graham Vincent and Emma Smith both decided that they had to stand down from the committee and were thanked for their contributions. Robert Skeen and Peter Cornelissen expressed their willingness to serve. These offers were gratefully received but it was also suggested that there ought to be more female committee members.

Alison Taylor, former County Archaeologist, had agreed to give a lecture in memory of John Alexander. The format was discussed and the aim is to hold one event on a Saturday afternoon during the period February – May 2012, with three speakers, including Alison, to be held in a larger venue than for our normal lectures. Speakers will be invited to talk either on John's work or on their own as it reflects John's interests. Wide publicity will be needed.

The deadline for applications for the bursary competition is 30th March this year so no applications have yet been received, although interest has been expressed. Laura Boxell, one of the 2010 winners, had reported on how she had used the bursary, and it was agreed to add this to the website.

Fieldwalking had continued at Comberton and Toft, with one Sunday at Burwell Fen. The field officer was aiming to find further fen edge fieldwalking to contrast with the claylands, but in the meantime access to fields on the southern side of Comberton was being sought. Much of the processing of the Wimpole excavation finds and data had now been completed, but volunteers were sought for counting and listing the bone.

The first stage of the project to publish a synthesis of fieldwork finds was now coming to an end, with all the information from 46 sites walked since 1990 gathered in the same digitised format, apart from some anomalies and gaps to be resolved. The files would be deposited with the HER.

It was decided to affiliate to the Cambridgeshire Association for Local History at an annual cost of £10, since this would be another means of publicising the Group. We also accepted an invitation to a planning meeting on the BBC's *Hands on History* project

CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

CAS lecture meetings are on Mondays at 6.00pm at the Law Faculty, West Road, Cambridge, which members of the Group are welcome to attend. The programme continues with:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 7 March | AGM at 5.45pm, followed at 6pm by Belinda Crerar on <i>The decapitated dead of Roman London and Cambridgeshire: a rural/urban divide?</i> |
| 4 April | Dr Andrew Reid on <i>Cattle droving and Cambridgeshire</i> |
| 9 May | Mark Hinman on <i>New Landscapes of the Cambridgeshire claylands</i> |
| 6 June | Prof Martin Millett on <i>Rural Society in Roman Yorkshire – recent research</i> |

Spring conference: Saturday, 19th March 2011 *From Camulodunum to Durobrivae, aspects of Roman Life in the Eastern Region*, to be held in the Law Faculty, West Road, Cambridge. Details are enclosed or emailed separately.

In addition, up to 20 delegates may join the speakers and others for lunch at Newnham College. Requests to book a place should be sent to the Conference Registrar, John Stanford 0776 4606682 and places will be offered on a 'first come first served' basis. The hot buffet lunch costs £18.50.

CONFERENCES/COURSES

Courses at Madingley Hall:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 3 April | <i>Pastures, greens and commons</i> |
| 10 April | <i>Moot and hundred meeting places</i> |
| 16/17 April and 14/15 May | <i>Introduction to archaeological field survey</i> |
| 20-22 May | <i>Religion and beliefs in the archaeological landscape</i> |
| 19 June | <i>The legacy of Occupation: bunkers, ghosts and swastikas in the Channel Islands</i> |
| 1-3 July | <i>Celebrations of death: an archaeology and anthropology of death</i> |
| 12-14 August | <i>Tracing prehistoric ancestry using DNA</i> |
| 12-14 August | <i>Artists of the Ice Age</i> |
| 7-9 September | <i>Meet the Spartans</i> |

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Monday, 7 March | CBA Winter General Meeting: Archaeology, Community, Stewardship. 10.30am – 5pm, British Academy, London |
| 19 March | Mummies of Ancient Egypt study day. University of London |
| 29 April | Oral personal histories on the themes of <i>Ethology and Primatology</i> , Babbage Lecture Theatre, Downing Street, Cambridge. Free but booking required. |
| 2 – 6 May | Archaeology survey week. Oxford University DCE |
| 21 May | <i>Designing with water: new work in garden history</i> . McDonald Institute, to be held in the Cambridge University Law Faculty. £39 (lunch is not included) |

Cambridge University Institute of Continuing Education classes (all at 7.15pm) from May include:

Mondays: *Civilisation: the archaeology of complex society*. 9 meetings, 2 field trips. Certificate in Archaeology course

Tuesdays: *Working with archaeological materials*. 8 meetings, 3 Saturday practicals. Diploma in Archaeology course

Thursdays: *From here to eternity? Death and the wider landscape of Stonehenge*. 9 meetings, 1 field trip.

The WEA is running a 6 week course *Exploring Cambridge* on foot on Thursdays from 6.30pm starting on 5th May

CAMBRIDGE FESTIVAL OF SCIENCE

Besides Ken McNamara's talk mentioned above, the Festival offers:

19 March, 10am-5pm *The archaeology of communication* at West Stow Anglo-Saxon village
10.30am-4pm *The science of archaeology* at the McDonald Institute

EXCAVATIONS

Training and other excavations for this summer are now beginning to be advertised. For details go to: www.britarch.ac.uk (Council for British Archaeology)

EXHIBITIONS

Harborough Museum, Market Harborough – many finds from the Hallaton shrine. It is hoped the helmet and cheek pieces will join the display in 2012

Sutton Hoo, Woodbridge, Suffolk – *Captured on camera: the summer of 1939*. Photographs taken by two visitors. Until 20 March.

British Museum – *Afghanistan: crossroads of the ancient world* 3 March to 3 July 2011

The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford – *Heracles to Alexander the Great: treasures from the royal capital of Macedon*. 7 April – 29 August

NEWS

At Trumpington Meadows, just south of Cambridge, the Cambridge Archaeological Unit found a ditch dug around 800BC, to one side of which were many houses and storage pits, and to the other, only funerary monuments of Neolithic and Bronze Age date.

At Must Farm, near Peterborough, the Cambridge Archaeological Unit has found what may be the oldest basket trap specifically for eels to be identified. It was made in the Bronze Age, around 1100BC.

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

British Archaeology January/February 2011 and March/April 2011

CBA Newsletter, December 2010

CBA Conservation Update February 2011

English Heritage Research News No. 15, Autumn 2010

English Heritage Research Review 2009

The Archaeology of Animals – Simon JM Davis. Batsford. 1987

Prehistoric Britain and Ireland – J Forde-Johnston. JM Dent & Sons Ltd. 1976 (has plans of many sites)

Understanding Archaeological Investigation – Philip Barker. Batsford. 1986

Susan May, Secretary