



## CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD GROUP

**Newsletter Number 163**

**May 2011**

[www.cafg.net](http://www.cafg.net)

President	Dr Paul Spoerry	Vice-President	Dr Sue Oosthuizen
Chairman	Barrie Fuller, 47 Queen Edith's Way, Cambridge, CB1 4PJ		
Secretary	Susan May, 94 High Street, Great Shelford, Cambridge, CB22 5EH, tel 01223 843121; email: <a href="mailto:cafg.may@ntlworld.com">cafg.may@ntlworld.com</a>		
Treasurer	Dudley Pusey, 45 St Laurence Road, Foxton, Cambridge, CB22 6SF, tel 01223 503600		

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011. The following Officers and Committee Members were elected for 2011/12:

Chairman	Barrie Fuller, email <a href="mailto:bf202@cam.ac.uk">bf202@cam.ac.uk</a>
Secretary	Susan May, email <a href="mailto:cafg.may@ntlworld.com">cafg.may@ntlworld.com</a> , tel 01223 843121
Treasurer	Dudley Pusey, email <a href="mailto:puseydc@ntlworld.com">puseydc@ntlworld.com</a> , tel 01223 503600
Field Officer	Mike Coles, email <a href="mailto:Michael@coles741.freeseerve.co.uk">Michael@coles741.freeseerve.co.uk</a> , tel 01223 871403
Committee	Colin Coates, email <a href="mailto:c.coates@virgin.net">c.coates@virgin.net</a> , tel 01733 243715
	Peter Cornelissen, email <a href="mailto:peter@cornelissen.org.uk">peter@cornelissen.org.uk</a> , tel 01638 668748
	Terry Dymott, email <a href="mailto:terry.dymott@btinternet.com">terry.dymott@btinternet.com</a> , tel 01223 263292
	Robert Skeen, email <a href="mailto:robertskeen@email.com">robertskeen@email.com</a> , tel 01763 262269
	John Waterhouse, email <a href="mailto:john.waterhouse@anglia.ac.uk">john.waterhouse@anglia.ac.uk</a> , tel 01223 244208

The chairman reported on an eventful though sad year, in which we lost our President, Dr John Alexander. However the Group gained Dr Paul Spoerry as President and Dr Susan Oosthuizen as vice-president. The Group had also gained a new website, for which the chairman expressed his thanks to those involved, particularly Peter Cornelissen. The Group was now even more closely involved with the Department of Archaeology.

The excavations at Wimpole had been very useful for the Group, with lots of visitors, and we would be returning this year to further investigate Mr Ratford's house. The BBC had made contact in relation to their "Hands On History" project, which was to see a focus on archaeology with "Digging up Britain" projects, including hands-on events with BBC support in July, and broadcasts in the autumn. The Group had been asked if it would be involved, and this had been discussed with the National Trust, who were welcoming. However, further discussions were required.

The chairman commented that members had been very active this year and expressed his thanks to all for their efforts and enthusiasm, especially to John Waterhouse and Stephen Reed for their work in preparing reports for the Historic Environment Record. At the invitation of the President, a vote of thanks was given to the chairman for his work.

The field officer's, secretary's and treasurer's reports had been circulated and were received: they will be filed with the minutes, but if you did not receive copies and would like them, please let the secretary know. Noting that only one application had been received so far for the Val Whittaker Memorial Prize, the chairman agreed to contact the tutor at Hills Road Sixth Form College to invite late applications. The field officer further reported that the season had revealed one previously

unknown Roman site, had detailed the extent of the Comberton Roman villa site and had revealed a Neolithic flint scatter in the vicinity of the villa site. The treasurer made one correction to the unexamined accounts: expenditure on the website in 2010-11 had been £94.40, not £94.90 (the total was correct). He also clarified the difference between income and expenditure transferred to the Accumulated Fund: expenditure of £771.39 but income of £486.88 resulted in the total of -284.51. *The accounts have now been examined and certified correct.*

The AGM resolved that subscriptions should be retained at:

£8 for individual membership

£11 family membership

Entrance to lectures for non-members £1

The chairman reported that the favoured idea for a memorial to John Alexander had been for a conference. Alison Taylor had agreed to speak and had suggested that a lecture room at the Law Faculty could be used. She had been in touch with someone who was interested in pulling together people who had worked with Dr Alexander in Africa. Ms Taylor and Mr Fuller would be involved in arrangements: Mr Fuller asked any member to email him if they had with ideas or information on anyone who had worked with Dr Alexander. It appeared that the Department was not planning any memorial event.

It was hoped to run the event within 8 – 10 months, and the President agreed with the suggestion that a date be fixed as soon as possible and emphasised the importance that it should not clash with other archaeology events. He expressed his thanks to the officers for their hard work and offered to help with the memorial to John Alexander.

Following the AGM, Dr Spoerry talked about “Not Excavating”.

## LECTURES

This is the last in this season’s lecture programme, in the seminar room at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Downing Street, Cambridge. Parking is available on site from Tennis Court Road.

1 June, 7.30pm John MacGinnis on *Excavating a provincial capital of the Assyrian Empire*  
Also presentation of Val Whittaker Memorial Prize

## WEDNESDAY WALKS

We will take the opportunity to go as a Group on two of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology Wednesday evening free guided walks, both meeting at 7.00 pm:

8 June Historic village of Longstanton, including both churches and the newly restored World War II pillbox. Meet at All Saints Church, High Street. Sturdy footwear required.

13 July Huntingdon – trace human occupation and impact along the riverside. Meet outside the entrance of the Cromwell Museum, Grammar School Walk, PE229 3LF.

This means we will **NOT** be at Bar Hill on these evenings.

A copy of the outreach programme is enclosed for those who have not yet been sent it and members may well find events of interest individually.

On Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> August, the Group will offer a guided inspection of the excavations at Wimpole, both for those who have been working there and for members (or partners) who have not been able to see them. Again, we will **NOT** be at Bar Hill that evening.

## 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 or evening walk. We meet from about 7.15 pm. A plan can be provided for those who have not been before.

One other evening when we will **NOT** be at Bar Hill is Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> July, in order to let diggers rest their weary bones.

## NEW WEBSITE

The new website is now online and we hope you will use it as a resource and give your feedback. There is a “blogs” page, which all members can 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, email: [peter@cornelissen.org.uk](mailto:peter@cornelissen.org.uk)

There is also a gallery where members can upload photographs. Again, contact Peter Cornelissen for the relevant link.

## FIELDWORK

We have finished fieldwalking for this season after 24 Sunday mornings out in the fields of Comberton, Toft and a one-off at Burwell. The weather has been kind as we only lost those days of hard winter in the second half of December. On average seven members have been out on each Sunday morning and between us we have made about 750 find points – mostly post-medieval pottery.

The outcome of all this work has in some ways been disappointing in view of the large area walked. In November we found a small scatter of Roman pottery north of Bennell's Farm and then no more, other than post medieval, over the whole of the area we looked at in Toft. Our move to the south and east of Comberton church initially gave the same blank result, until the 27<sup>th</sup> March when we recovered a very significant amount of Roman pottery and building material. This seems to be the surviving remains of a villa site first seen as mosaic floors and a stone column in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when gravel was being quarried in this field. The finds we made covered a quite small area and perhaps this is one part of the field where gravel was not dug out. We will explore the possibility of getting agreement for geophysics to be done here at some suitable time.

While walking the fields in Toft we did recover a few struck flints but the last field in Comberton, to the east of the Roman material, is a gravel soil on which we found a larger number of struck flints, including a very nice core for long blades (picture on the website). The field with struck flint might be worth visiting again when conditions are suitable, to undertake a more detailed study. This site of a south facing gravel bank over-looking the course of the Bourn Brook would have been attractive to hunters and settlers in the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods.

## WIMPOLE EXCAVATIONS 2011

In July we will be investigating further Mr Ratford's house, near Home Farm, Wimpole, which we partly dug last year. We will be removing turf and topsoil on Saturday and Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July, followed by excavation from Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> July to Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> July.

The full proposal is attached, together with a form for you to indicate when you might be available. 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. Please return the availability form to Terry Dymott, either in person or by email to: [terry.dymott@btinternet.com](mailto:terry.dymott@btinternet.com) or post to 26 Barrons Way, Comberton, Cambridge CB23 7EQ. The

aim is to be able to judge the likely number of participants so that the work programme can be planned. It is not a commitment – you can change your plans at any time.

## **COMMITTEE MEETING**

A committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30pm at Bar Hill. Any member is welcome to attend the meeting – if you have any issues you would like discussed, please let me know.

## **NOT EXCAVATING !**

After the AGM on 6<sup>th</sup> April, Paul Spoerry, remembering John Alexander's lecture of the previous year when he had spoken of the lack of professional archaeologists in some parts of the world, talked to us about ways of looking at the landscape without excavating. Techniques that can be used include desk top assessments, air photography, survey both earthwork and geophysical, and fieldwalking.

Desk top assessment includes consulting the Historic Environment Record, any previous reports on the area in question and other archives. A start can also be made on interpreting the landscape through air photographs by putting crop marks into context and looking at other features, such as differences in landholdings either side of a road.

As an example of survey, Paul instanced the site of a Cistercian convent at Tilty Abbey, Essex, where the Unit had been asked to produce a better survey than that existing, where an enormous amount was discovered. As a single phase site it was a good subject for resistivity, which is good for showing wall lines, whereas magnetometry showed a building, possibly wooden, not revealed by resistivity. A detailed earthwork survey produced with the aid of a plane table, tapes, a total station and human experience also showed an incredible amount of detail.

In summary, resistivity measures differences in moisture levels in soils since they affect resistance to current flow, is slow compared to magnetometry, and is good on stone, walls and pavements. Magnetometry survey, on the other hand, using a gradiometer, picks up changes in the magnetic field due to accumulation of magnetic material from burning, perhaps from industrial uses (maybe a farrier) or kitchens. This technique is good for field ditches, enclosures and possible timber buildings. Metal gives a white noise on the plans. On the graphs a horseshoe would give a very narrow big positive and negative signal, whereas kilns give a high positive signal with a smaller negative one and rather spread out. Geophysics does not, however, work on all sites.

Paul then talked of his experience of fieldwalking in central Greece as a student in the 1980's, in particular at the Valley of the Muses in Boetia. This was a total landscape survey, from upland areas, where they walked up to the cultivation line and the peaks of lesser mountains, down to the valleys, recording using maps unofficially obtained from the Greece Ministry of Defence. 100+ sites were found, with 100s/1000s of sherds at every site. Walkers first walked 15 metres apart and then gridded areas of concentrations. As it was not possible to see all of the ground surface, a calculation known as normalisation, multiplying by the percentage of ground visible, was used to estimate the total number of sherds. For example, around the town of Thespieae it was calculated there were 1.37 million sherds, comprising 16% of the sherds visible in the soil - purely from manuring, 8 million in total!

Sites found ranged from the prehistoric through the Medieval/Byzantine period at the end of the Roman empire to early modern times, and the technique was able to pick up not only individual sites but the expansion and contraction of a city. It was possible to understand that in the late Byzantine period, the Turks lived in cities/towns and the Greeks in large villages, possibly dating from classical times. There are also small more modern Slavic villages.

In 1989, following a drought in which it had lost half its water, the team investigated a lake drained by the British in the 19 century, but also by the Mycenaeans,. They looked for a lost Frankish town and found it on promontory in the lake after a walk of 5km around lake edge. It sat on a lost classical sanctuary site which remained clean, pristine, all denuded and finds left on the surface. It was possible to recreate the plan of a European knight's fee (land holding)

## **WHAT MEAN THESE BONES?**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> May, Professor Tony Legge outlined what the interpretation of faunal data in archaeology can tell us. He began by explaining that there used to be a debate as to who was best qualified to make the interpretations, archaeologists or veterinarians. It is now mainly the preserve of archaeologists, veterinary text books often being wrong.

It is essential to control the variables in considering a site: for example, experiments show that sieving reveals many more bones [sieve designs appear in an article by Tony in the latest Journal of Field Archaeology]. It is also necessary to understand the social and economic background to finds deposited in museums or private collections: in south Cambridgeshire, coprolite diggers often sold the bones and artefacts they found and sometimes enhanced the specimen, for example the *Bos Primigenius* skull from Burwell Fen apparently with a flint arrow embedded. Also the find spot may in fact be where the digger lived.

The smashing of bone found on early sites was to get at the energy stored in fat in the bone marrow. It is known that a diet solely of rabbit would cause kidney failure as they contain protein but no fat, and also that at enclosure the diet of poor people was worse than before as they lost their own cattle, so having no milk fats. This all suggests that in early societies, fat was more important than meat.

Bones show us that cattle grew smaller from the Mesolithic (2 metres at the shoulder at Star Carr), through the Neolithic to the Bronze Age as they became domesticated. Presumably the smaller beasts were easier to handle and allowed more beasts to be grazed on the same land, thus spreading the risk. It is also now realised that malnourished mothers pass this on to their offspring.

Two sites were then examined: Grimes Graves and Hambledon Hill/Stepleton. There were no Neolithic bones at Grimes Graves, but shafts were filled with Bronze Age middens, including bones and charcoal. Here, cattle were becoming hornless, whereas at Down Farm, Dorset at the same time the cattle were horned. Excavations at Grimes Graves in the 1970's and 1980's in different areas both found a very similar proportion of different animals. In cattle, the smallest males were bigger than the biggest females, whereas the sizes of sheep and deer male and female were much closer. Nearly half the cattle were killed before they were 6 months, most were dead by 6 years and there was a heavy preponderance of female bones. Tony had published in 1974 that this was likely to have been a dairy herd with many calves killed, but at the time other British archaeologists argued that this could not be so. However, it is now possible to isolate milk proteins from prehistoric pots and lots of dairy products have been found, supporting his view. Milk products could be kept for years in the form of cheese, or used for trade. The meat would have been either very young veal or old female – neither very palatable.

At Hambledon Hill and Stepleton, where Neolithic long barrows and causewayed enclosures were now ploughed out, the same animals in roughly the same proportion were found in various parts of the site. Most cattle - mostly female - were killed on site between 2 and 4 years, indicated by the consistent number of fused bones found. There were not many new-born sheep bones, suggesting that people were perhaps not on the site at lambing time. The interpretation is that it was a ceremonial gathering place, mostly in late summer/autumn and that animals surplus to the herd were brought with people as food. Plant remains show lots of grain, partly processed and very nearly clean. There was also a carbonised grape seed. The post-death process for humans was excarnation, bones being gnawed by dogs.

## LOCAL EVENTS

4 June, 5.30pm: Cambridgeshire Association for Local History AGM, followed by Local History Awards 2011 at 6pm. The Farmland Museum, Waterbeach

17 September, 11am – 5 pm: 2<sup>nd</sup> Cambridgeshire Open Air History Fair, Cherry Hinton Recreation Ground, in conjunction with the Cherry Hinton Festival. We intend to have a presence there.

Cambridgeshire Archaeology Outreach Programme – walks, open days, finds identification days. Programme enclosed.

## 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 season ends with:

6 June Prof Martin Millett on *Rural Society in Roman Yorkshire – recent research*

The CAS excursions programme is:

15 June, 2.15pm	Guided tour of the village of Melbourn. Cost £4.00. Meet in Melbourn
14 September, 11.00am	Guided tour of King's Lynn. Cost £8.00. Meet in King's Lynn
29 September, 10.00am	Guided tour of Hertford and Much Hadham. Cost £25.00; coach from Trumpington Park & Ride

Booking for each to be made with the CAS Excursion Secretary, Mr A Kirby, 3 Hills View, Great Shelford, Cambridge, CB22 5AY, but I have more details.

## CONFERENCES/COURSES

Courses at Madingley Hall (additional to those listed in the last newsletter):

8-10 July	<i>Capability Brown's "Profusion of water"</i>
5-7 August	<i>Anglo-Norman lords, ladies and castle-building</i>
7-9 October	<i>The landscapes and buildings of Tudor England</i>

The Open University runs a number of archaeology related courses, including *World Archaeology* and *Archaeology: the science of investigation*. [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)

## EXCAVATIONS

Training and other excavations for this summer are now being advertised. For details go to: [www.britarch.ac.uk/briefing](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/briefing) (Council for British Archaeology) and [www.digs.archaeology.co.uk](http://www.digs.archaeology.co.uk) (Current Archaeology).

The Fen Edge Archaeology Group, with the assistance of the CAS, is intending to carry out a test pit excavation on the outskirts of Cottenham from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> July. If you are interested in taking part, email the CAS Secretary, Chris Michaelides, at [secretary@camantsoc.org](mailto:secretary@camantsoc.org).

The Copped Hall Trust has sent information on its archaeological field schools for those already familiar with basic excavation and recording techniques, which take place from 8 – 12 August and 15 – 19 August, continuing investigations into the development of a Tudor grand house from medieval beginnings. Cost £90 for each week.

## EXHIBITIONS

Fitzwilliam Museum, until 4 September: *Treasure under your feet*. Finds from the East of England that have contributed to our understanding of the life and times of our predecessors. There are also lunchtime talks connected with this exhibition on 6<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> July and 10<sup>th</sup> August.

Museum of London, until spring 2012: *Archaeology in Action*. Exhibition of its work in London by Museum of London Archaeology, featuring 5 key sites, new finds and illustrations of their daily work.

British Museum, 23 June to 9 October: *Treasures of Heaven*. Sacred treasures from the late Roman to Late Medieval periods.

Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and Country Park, Sutton Cheney, Nuneaton, Leicestershire has opened a new outdoor interpretation trail following the discovery of where the battle actually took place. At the Centre until 30<sup>th</sup> December is *The Medieval Woman – instrument of the Devil, exulted above all angels*.

Colchester Museum, until the end of 2011: display of records and neolithic finds made on the foreshore at Dovercourt, Essex by two brothers over 18 years.

## WEB SITES

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/southdowns](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/southdowns) – a general introduction to the landscapes of the newly designated South Downs National Park

Also at [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk) is the newly launched National Heritage List – the list descriptions of all England's listed buildings, scheduled monuments and other registered sites.

[www.historiclandscape.co.uk](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk) – an introduction to the history and archaeology of Cranbourne Chase

## NEWS

CBA Mid Anglia and CBA East Anglia merged on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2011, to become CBA East. The Group now covers the counties of Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

The CBA's annual grant funding from the British Academy is to be phased out over the next five years, starting in the current year. The CBA's five-year strategy for *Making Archaeology Matter* – [www.britarch.ac.uk/cba/objectives](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/cba/objectives) remains highly relevant and a new action plan is being developed. It will, in future, depend largely on membership subscriptions to support its work, which includes running the National Festival of British Archaeology. **Why not become a member of the CBA, or give membership of the CBA or YAC (Young Archaeologists' Club) to someone you know?** You would then receive the excellent journal *British Archaeology* and other information and know that you are supporting the Association's campaigns on behalf of archaeology.

The Ministry of Justice has decided that archaeologists in England and Wales will not routinely be required to rebury all excavated human remains, as has been the case since 2008, provided they are retained in suitable facilities.

## LIBRARY ADDITIONS

British Archaeology May/June 2011

CBA Newsletter, April 2011

Cambridgeshire Association for Local History Review 2010

Susan May, Secretary