



CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD GROUP

Newsletter Number 165

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www.cafg.net

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not paid your subscriptions for 2011/12 please pay the treasurer now. The rates are £8 for individual membership and £11 family membership.

LECTURES

The new season's lecture programme continues, at 7.30pm in the seminar room at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Downing Street, Cambridge. Parking is available on site from Tennis Court Road: if the barrier is down press the button for the attendant.

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| 1 February | Robert Harding on "Spiceworld: A Medieval port of trade on the Malabar Coast" (south India) |
| 7 March | Dr Rachel Ballantyne on "Arable farming and economy along the Roman fen-edge" |
| 4 April | AGM |

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.

FIELDWORK

In the current fieldwalking season, from October last, we have looked at four sites so far. We spent four weeks at Boxworth, continuing in an area we started in 2010, finding a second concentration of Roman pottery and brick, some 0.5 km away from the first, besides a general scatter of material of all ages. One of the Roman sites certainly shows on aerial photographs. Then it was off to fields in Arrington where we had occasional sherds of Roman and Medieval pottery but, more interestingly, a small scatter of struck flints in an area which we are about to examine further. A crotal (animal) bell was also found and an article about it can be found on our website.

In December we walked on the fen edge at Reach with members of the local community and found quite a collection of struck and burnt flint, with a high density concentration along what may have been a waterway. A star find was a leaf shaped arrow head. Still with flintwork, we have just completed a detailed survey of an area in Comberton where we found some struck flints, including a core, in last winter's general fieldwalking. We have found a small amount more, but these have yet to be processed.

Mike Coles summarised these findings at his talk on the 11th January with the aid of finds plots created by Peter Cornelissen; adding the cautionary tale of the Anglesey Abbey car park extension, where a few members of the Group had walked the previous April finding only a few pieces of struck and burnt flint. The Cambridge Archaeological Unit subsequently excavated, finding two Bronze Age roundhouses, a trackway, pits and a granary platform. Fieldwalking does not necessarily find all that is under the ground.

Watch out for emails/phone calls for the next site, which is expected to be at Boxworth.

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 continues with:

- 6 February Craig Cessford on *“Such filthy, horrid, dirty work”: archaeology and 19th century Cambridge College servants*
- 5 March Tom Williamson on *Explaining regional landscapes: medieval fields and farms in eastern England* AGM at 5.45pm
- 2 April Members of the Twenty Pence Project Team on *a Roman settlement on the Cottenham fen edge: the story so far of an exploration by the Fen Edge Archaeology Group and CAS*

The CAS spring conference, *From the Ground Up – Contemporary Building Recording Methods and Practice*, is on **Saturday 31 March** at the Law Faculty.

CBA EAST

On **Saturday 3rd March** CBA East members are invited to an exclusive walking tour of the historic heart of Cambridge, led by Honor Ridout. The tour departs at 2pm from outside the Friends Meeting House, Jesus Lane, Cambridge and will last for about 1 hour. If you wish to attend, please email: aileenconnor705@btinternet.com with numbers so that the walk can be properly planned.

On **Saturday 12th May** CBA East will hold its AGM at the Verulamium Museum. The provisional programme is: 10.30 pm welcome; 11 am talks on the archaeological evidence for the transition from Iron Age to Roman; noon the AGM, then lunch and an opportunity to visit the Museum; and an opportunity to join a guided walk around St Albans in the afternoon.

WEBSITE

We hope you will use the website as a resource and give your feedback. There are now articles on some of the finds from Wimpole.

The “blogs” page has been removed for lack of use. If you wish to make a comment you can do so through our Facebook page. Members can still upload photographs to the members’ gallery on the website, contact Peter Cornelissen, email: peter@cornelissen.org.uk for the relevant link.

SKELETON GREEN REVISITED

Mark Hinman of Pre Construct Archaeology talked to us on the 5th October 2011 about the ongoing excavations at Skeleton Green, Puckeridge, off the A10, in advance of development. Skeleton Green lies within the Braughing Roman town, which was part of the Catuvellaunian tribal territory at the time of Claudius. It lay off the junction of Ermine Street and the road between Camolodunum and Verulamium. Rescue excavations carried out in advance of the Puckeridge bypass in 1971/2

found a swathe of Iron Age and Roman remains south of the current excavations, including over 150 cremations and 7 inhumations.

In the 2011 excavations the 200th cremation burial had just been found, with 400 complete pots plus broken ones. These cremations lay mainly outside and to the east and north of a late Iron Age enclosure ditch and there was a concentration of activity around the time of the Roman conquest, finds including metal work of Augustus. To the far north of the site were 20 inhumation graves, with much Samian, white ware and black colour coated terra nigra ware, mainly 2nd century AD.

Every hole was hitting a burial, though it was not always possible to see the grave cut until the pot was being revealed. Some vessels were intact, some deliberately broken, and some had part of the rim broken off – possibly as a rite to “kill” the vessel. Some pits had burnt timber linings, similar to pits at Stansted. Graves would have a shelf for the funeral bier, but the burial often cut several others. One vessel was found upright with a cup in the top. There was a significant amount of imported pottery, largely Gallic. The skeletons were in different states of preservation and there was no dating material in the deepest burials, no surviving animal bone.

On the east of the site, cutting through cremations, was a tile kiln, first mentioned in court rolls of 1516, including the working chamber with a ramp to the outside and the firing chamber, whose arches had been repaired several times.

The site was rated one of the best in Hertfordshire with layers of inhumations, and cremations likely to have taken place nearby as possible pyre material had been found. The local inhabitants seem to have been very Romanised and of a certain rank. The inhumations in the north of the site were big and the cremations were organised with few multiple burials, showing no signs of panic.

The excavation had the support of the local group and museum staff, but Mark invited members of the Group to join the excavation team as volunteers and a number have been helping.

Mark also reported at the CAS autumn conference on 26th November, by which time 62 inhumations had been found plus further cremations. The cremations were generally in plain grey or larger white globular vessels, and where there were 2 pots together the second was often a cup. Sometimes a plate was laid over the cremation vessel as a lid and sometimes the vessels were within a box. In some graves there were up to 8 vessels. Artefacts included a nail cleaner and an oil lamp.

Inhumations were mainly east of the ditch with the cremations or north of the northern cremations. Graves up to 2.5 metres long were found within but not central to a circular ditch and the thought was that perhaps graves had been dug around a tree. Artefacts included a copper alloy bracelet with a chain between the terminals, the metal fittings of a coffin, the remains of hobnail shoes and a snapped shale bracelet, probably belonging to an infant.

THE EARLIEST HUMAN OCCUPATION OF BRITAIN

On the 2nd November, Richard Preece talked to us about some of the findings of the Ancient Human Occupation of Britain (AHOB) project, in which he had been involved for 10 years as an invertebrate specialist. The presence or absence of *Miomys* (primitive and extinct) and *Arvicola* vole fossils had given significant assistance with dating since they are not found together.

The understanding of the progress of humanid dispersal from Africa was changed, by chance, in Dmanisi in Georgia when 5 crania of small-brained individuals, about 1.7 million years old, were found in association with basic stone tools and animal bones including rhinoceros of a species which became extinct about 1 million years ago. The humanids are thought to be a form of *Homo erectus*. This was probably the route into Europe, although no remains have been found in Europe from the following half a million years, the next oldest being about 1.2 million years old in a cave in Atapuerca, Spain, proposed as a new species, *Homo antecessor*.

The AHOB project sought to discover when the first humans reached Britain. Sites dating from the Cromerian period (approximately 750,000 to 480,000 years ago) have been found along the three large rivers of the period: the Solent (with little archaeological evidence); the Thames which flowed across Essex and was diverted by the Anglian ice sheets of about 450,000 years ago; and the Bytham which flowed from the Midlands across East Anglia, before being extinguished by the ice. Early archaeology is also found on coastal plains, such as on a raised beach at Boxgrove and in cave systems such as Kents Cavern and Westbury Cave. The occupation at Boxgrove was dated to some 500,000 years ago, when the climate was temperate with deciduous woodland.

In the mid 1990s the view was that human occupation of Northern Europe and Britain only occurred after 500,000 years ago, and the hypothesis was that human and *Miomys* remains would not be found together. However, because of the exposure of deposits from the cliffs at Happisburgh, Norfolk, a study was made of mammal bones found in the area in the 19th century and a bovid bone was found to have cut marks. A black flint handaxe was then found on the foreshore by a local archaeologist, Mike Chambers. AHOB has carried out 3 excavations there. Site 1, dug in 2004, found a few bones with signs of impact, 78 knapped flints and 1 axe manufacturing flake. A dig this last summer revealed many more flint refits of Acheulian date (in Europe from roughly 400,000 years ago), and large mammal bones with cut marks. The environment was boreal woodland with a slow river and dense vegetation, and July temperatures of 12-15°C and winter of -11 to -3°C. *Arvicola* were present.

Cliff erosion is also taking place at Pakefield in Suffolk. The first artefact discovered was a flint flake but no more have been found, although the 2003 dig of the unio-bed found flakes and sabre-toothed cat fossils. The site was associated with *Miomys*, therefore much older and producing possibly the earliest evidence of humans in Britain, dating to about 700,000 years ago. It had a fully temperate, Mediterranean style climate with deciduous forest and July temperatures of 17-23°C and winter ones of -6 to -4°C.

Happisburgh Site 2, also dug in 2004, revealed a hand axe in a glacial context, so not in situ. Site 3 on the foreshore, dug over several years, revealed a series of gravels with associated estuarine silts, and boreal forest on the south edge. The 70 tools and flakes found in the gravels had clearly not been rolled; other finds were pine cones and the remains of large vertebrates – elephant, horse, hippopotamus, elk, deer, and a beaver-like animal. The climate appears cooler – July temperatures of 16-18°C and winter of up to -3°C. The magnetic polarity appears to be reversed, known to have happened about 780,000 years ago. The colder climate but the presence of mammals including hippo suggest that this site may have existed around the polarity reversal, some 800,000 to 1 million years ago. Digging here has only scratched the surface, but space to dig is running out. No handaxes have been found here.

The area of search covers some 80 miles and handaxes have been found all along the coast. The results show a human presence before the Anglian cold stage and in both warm and cool climates. Currently Pakefield and Happisburgh 3 are the oldest sites.

WIMPOLE EXCAVATIONS 2010/2011

On 11th January, Mike Coles put together the results so far of the excavation of “Mr Ratford’s house” in 2010 and 2011. The chairman thanked Mike for all his work as the main driver on the practical side of the Group’s work, noting that University sources had commented favourably on the organisation of the dig.

Mike reminded us that part of the reason for the excavations was to provide a public access site for the Festival of British Archaeology and reported that there had been about 1500 – 2000 visitors over the week.

Parch marks obvious in 2010 showed the layout of a building quite clearly, although it was apparently unknown. Geophysics added little, partly because of the rubble underground. The house was there when Home Farm was built, because a corner of the nearest barn was cut off to accommodate it, but must have been demolished by 1810-20, although we have no direct evidence. The 1638 Hare map of Wimpole shows a house belonging to William Stok in this area, one of a group of 7 houses with 3 further away. The houses are shown to a standard design, so the drawings do not help with how they actually looked. Mr Ratford's house shown on the 1794 plans of Sir John Soane lines up with the parch marks on the ground. The thin layer of overlying soil showed no signs of ploughing so the field has been meadow since the early 19th century.

Colin Coates had drawn a composite plan of the 2010 and 2011 excavations and Mike took us through the interpretation to date. The main house was 17th century (built in the 1660s when Thomas Chicheley regained his estate?), with a low red brick wall 2 bricks thick, on top of which would have been a timber frame. There were at least 3 cross walls. At the south end was a massive brick gable with a fireplace built into the wall, possibly built in more than one phase, and the house was likely to have been 2 storeys here. There was no evidence of floors, but a 0.5m wide x 1 m long slot in the brickwork was found inside the house, with no brick at the bottom and its purpose is unclear. On the south-east corner was a brick return, which could have been a door, stair or cupboard. There was some stone (probably roof) tile in this corner, but the main part of the roof may have been thatched.

In the 1760s an extension was built across the back of the house, with a clunch foundation, which is not unusual, and a tile floor in part. Under the foundation we found a large number of wine bottles dating to 1750-1760. There was no evidence of the superstructure, but brick in the south west corner was possibly a porch.

In the north west corner a further extension seems to have been built, with a yellow brick floor of around 1800 over clunch. This area produced lots of blue painted plaster on wattle and daub so must have had a timber frame. Another part of the floor had had 1 foot square yellow tiles, now all broken, over heavy clunch. A yellow brick pier lined up with the earlier extension wall. It seems likely that this part of the building was a dairy or kitchen or similar. The midden in this same corner produced 17th and 18th century pottery mixed up. Parts of this west side had a thin layer of cobbling underneath, not as substantial on the inside of the building as on the outside.

It is not known where exactly the 1638 house was, but some Medieval features were found underneath the later building. These included two slots, one containing 13th/14th century pot; post holes apparently associated with a structure; and Medieval pottery under the later wall. The Medieval features were only a few centimetres deep. Little 16th century pot was found.

Beyond the hedge a substantial drain running east-west ran round the end of the building, possibly built at the same time as the farm or in the 1760s when the extension was put up. Next to it was a massive chalk area. A number of similar drains have been found throughout the estate. The drain went through the wall on the east and then stopped and had no sludge in the bottom

Research into house types has brought up one visible in Comberton which appears to be of the same style, with a brick gable end and the rest of the house timber framed. According to the RCHM only 3 houses of this type remain in the area, 2 of them in Comberton. Mike also showed photographs of a house interior with an inglenook fireplace, likely to be very similar to this house.

A plan by Bridgeman in 1721 for the redevelopment of the Wimpole estate shows the house and garden with a separated later small building, probably a privy. This replaces the earlier house. Two others in the hamlet were also replaced, but 4 were not. Of 3 there is nothing left, but traces of one were found during works. So some of the hamlet was rebuilt with substantial houses.

VAL WHITTAKER MEMORIAL PRIZE

The deadline for the 2012 prize is 31st March 2012. Members of the Group are eligible to apply and full details can be found on our website: www.cafg.net .

COMMITTEE MEETING

A committee meeting was held on Wednesday, 19th October. At that time, funds totalled £2,519.45, including the Val Whittaker bequest, with 50 paid up members including 10 family memberships. Expenditure of around £20 for equipment, mainly for the Wimpole excavations, was authorised.

Wimpole Excavations

The excavations had received some welcome publicity through the BBC, but we expressed some reservations about the commitments required for such support and confirmed that we do not feel equipped to organise a full “community dig”.

44 intact bottle tops had been found at Wimpole and Robert Skeen offered to make a measuring gauge so that they could be recorded.

Website

Overall usage of the website over the previous 2 months had remained about the same as before. A member had asked about putting on the website some of his own work and we concluded that the best route would be to allow space in the articles section, providing that the item was clearly identified as the work of an individual and contained nothing detrimental to the Group. It was further agreed to add a running news item on fieldwalking and to remove the blogs section as it had not been used, allowing any comments to be made via Facebook.

Val Whittaker Memorial Prize

The revised wording of the Memorial Prize requirements had been circulated and approved and details had been sent to relevant contacts, published on the website, and flyers distributed.

Commemoration of John Alexander

Harvey Sheldon, who had dug with John at Shire Hall, had indicated his willingness to contribute.

2nd Cambridgeshire History Fair

Thanks were offered to Bill Hughes for setting up, manning and striking the Group's display and to all who had helped man it. The Fair is valuable as a means of maintaining a public presence.

Community Archaeology

We had a report on a meeting organised by Quentin Carroll, the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Manager, for units working in the County and local groups, talking about ways of working with local people. At that meeting Chris Evans of the Cambridge Archaeological Unit had committed 2 hours free for a preliminary assessment of the Oily Hall flint.

The Jigsaw Community Archaeology Officers were now in post and Terry Dymott was deputed to maintain contact. Workshops would probably now be arranged through this project.

CAS Autumn Conference

Details of the Group's display were discussed. At that time it was thought that the Group was being invited to talk; if so it would be on the findings at Wimpole over the last 2 years in their local context.

Fieldwork

Current fieldwalking was on the Childerley estate and possible future areas for fieldwalking included Cambridge Road Farm, Wimpole; Valley Farm, Arrington; Reach near Hurdle Hall; Comberton to

examine in detail an area with worked flints; Heath Farm, Fulbourn; and Brick Kiln Farm, Sawtry – this last would be a one-off full day examination.

John Waterhouse's work to digitise the fieldwork results from 51 sites was now fairly complete, the anomalies having been cleared. The next step was to try to identify some of the pot listed as "Unc" (unclassified) at sites where it constituted a large proportion of the pottery found. A general indication of period was probably as much as was needed. The first step in publication was to get the files to Quentin Carroll at Shire Hall.

Alliance to Reduce Crime against Heritage

We believed this alliance, set up by English Heritage, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Crown Prosecution Service, to be a worthy initiative, but not one in which the Group had a role unless specifically requested.

Cambridge Antiquarian Society Small Grants

We agreed to apply for a grant of £300 towards the identification of the flintwork from Oily Hall.

The next committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, 15th February 2012 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.

JIGSAW CAMBRIDGESHIRE

We have now applied to affiliate to JIGSAW, the new project supporting and developing community archaeology in Cambridgeshire, and have been asked to indicate the areas in which the Group is working or would like to work and in which it would like training.

The two JIGSAW Community Archaeologists are Joanna Richardson and Jemima Woolverton and are based at the Oxford Archaeology East premises at Bar Hill. The website is:

www.jigsawcams.org

CONFERENCES/COURSES

Weekend courses at Madingley Hall (see www.ice.cam.ac.uk for details):

10 - 12 February	<i>Sutton Hoo and the Goths</i>
2 – 4 March	<i>English village history – sources, methods and themes</i> <i>Markets and fairs – from medieval to modern</i>
9-11 March	<i>Osteoarchaeology – the study of ancient human remains</i>
20 April	<i>The landscape of monastic estates</i>

The next Historic Environment Research Conferences organised by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research will be held at the Law Faculty, West Road, Cambridge, at a cost of £43 each: see www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/events for further details

25 February Recent research in vernacular architecture: rural building traditions of the "poorer sort", 1600-1900

9 June Parks, gardens and designed landscapes of Medieval Wales

The McDonald Institute is also hosting, with the University of Chester, a Colloquium on Death, Memory and the Landscape on Saturday, 19 May.

25 February *The Long View* – place and prehistory in the Thames valley. The Prehistoric Society at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London

2-3 March Current Archaeology Live ! Senate House, London. See:
www.archaeologylive.co.uk

EXCAVATIONS

For details of training and other excavations being planned, go to: www.britarch.ac.uk/briefing (Council for British Archaeology) and www.digs.archaeology.co.uk (Current Archaeology).

NEWS

The CBA's Festival of British Archaeology 2012 will be held from Saturday 14 to Sunday 29 July.

New dating of teeth and bones from Kents Cavern and the Grotta del Cavallo in southern Italy suggest that anatomically modern humans are likely to have co-existed with Neanderthals in northern and southern Europe for several thousand years (British Archaeology Jan/Feb 2012)

EXHIBITIONS

Ely Museum – new displays of Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford – new Ancient Egypt and Nubia galleries

LANDSCAPE AND LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

The Landscape and Local History Group exists to support researchers in these fields and meets three or four times a year with contributions from members. The next meetings are:

6 March Horseheath Hall
6 June Cambridgeshire sources for local history

If you are interested in joining, contact Lyn Boothman at annys@boothman27.fsnet.co.uk or phone 01223 323042

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

Archaeology at Cambridge McDonald Institute annual report 2010-2011
British Archaeology November/December 2011, January/February 2012
Cambridge Antiquarian Society – Proceedings C for 2011
CBA Conservation Update, October 2011
CBA Newsletters, December 2011

Susan May, Secretary