



CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD GROUP

Newsletter Number 157

March 2010

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held on **Wednesday, 14th April 2010 at 7.30 p.m.** in the seminar room at the McDonald Institute, Downing Street, Cambridge.

An agenda, a nomination form for officers and committee of the Group, the minutes of the last AGM, a statement of the accounts (unconfirmed), and the secretary's and field officer's reports are enclosed for members. The committee comprises the Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Field Officer and five ordinary members and all posts are subject to election each year. Nominations are requested by 12th April but, at the discretion of the meeting, may be accepted at the AGM.

LECTURES

Lectures are normally held in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology or the McDonald Institute seminar room at 7.30 pm. The season continues with:

14 April	AGM followed by Dr John Alexander on <i>Heritage and Rescue Archaeology: an unauthorised view</i>
5 May	TBC
2 June	TBC

Parking is available on site, from Tennis Court Road.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to Terry Dymott for achieving distinction in his MA in Field Archaeology awarded by Birkbeck College.

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.

For those who have not yet found us: approach Bar Hill; at the roundabout where Tesco is on the left, go straight on; take the first right (Trafalgar Way) and Unit 15 is on the corner of the second left turn, with parking in front. Be careful of the large lorries in this area. A plan can be provided.

COMMITTEE MEETING

A committee meeting was held on the 20th January, when we noted that balances stood at £2,729, including £1,700 remaining of Val Whittaker's bequest; membership was slightly up on the previous year. Noting that subscription levels had last been increased in 2005, and in view of reducing interest income and increasing costs, we decided to recommend to the AGM that subscriptions

should be increased to £8 for individuals and £11 for families. However, the subscriptions of any new members joining before the end of the current financial year would cover them for the whole of 2010/11.

No applications for the bursary competition had yet been received, and it was considered that the deadline could be extended without compromising the presentation of an award at the AGM.

Committee members were all prepared to stand for office again.

Further fieldwork would be undertaken at Hurdle Hall, Reach and Childerley and we agreed to investigate the use of fields at Great Eversden for a fieldwalking exercise with YAC (Young Archaeologists Club) members. Future potential fieldwork included more at Great Eversden, excavations at Wimpole Hall and assistance with a possible excavation at Boxworth. Various members of the committee were working through the older fieldwork records and Excel files had now been produced for a number of sites. The aim was to submit the information to the HER (Historic Environment Record). It was, however, felt that the Group should not rely on the HER office to plot the information onto maps and committee members were tasked with making enquiries of a number of sources about possible software.

We then considered the possibility of publishing report(s) on general findings and themes arising from the results of fieldwork over a longer time span, rather than reports on individual sites, and of re-establishing an annual entry in PCAS. The first requirement was for a full record of all sites investigated: this was already partially complete and was to be updated. We also discussed how the web site could best be updated and agreed to follow this up.

The chairman was still investigating potential venues for a New Year dinner.

Mike Coles reported on the CBA Mid Anglia AGM, from which it appeared that the merger with CBA East Anglia would go ahead, which should produce an active organisation of more value to the Group. As a first step, it was to support the work of other organisations rather than producing an expensive printed newsletter.

The date of the next meeting has not yet been decided, but will be notified since any member is welcome to attend.

FIELDWORK

Fieldwalking has been rather affected by the weather since Christmas, but we have looked at fields belonging to the National Trust at Hurdle Hall, Reach and have found some struck flints. Continuing with the prehistoric emphasis, we returned briefly to Oily Hall, Lode to look at fields adjacent to those walked last winter, and found more flints, although not in the same quantity. The finds are being plotted against contour plans.

On 6th February we took YAC members (with their leaders and parents) fieldwalking at Great Eversden, with family groups investigating 10 metre squares. Despite the mud, a good time was had by all and the youngsters have taken the finds to wash and examine. One interesting find was a large lead weight from a Roman steelyard (beam scale). A big thank you has been received from YAC. We also gave local people and National Trust volunteers a taste of fieldwalking at Hurdle Hall on the first Sunday at that site.

We have now returned to the Childerley Estate, to fields accessed from Boxworth, where a small amount of Roman pot was found, but the opportunity will only be available for one more week, given the crop growth. If other fields are available after Easter we may be able to continue walking for a little longer.

TEXTILES IN ARCHAEOLOGY

On 3rd February Anne Taylor, curatorial assistant for archaeology at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, talked to us about textiles in archaeology – or a brief history of string. She reminded us that all textiles are made of string, which is any twisted fibre, whether of wool, cotton or other plant fibres, and that string for 1 hour's weaving takes 10 hours to spin.

Her studies were aimed at answering three questions: how old are the technologies; what technologies are necessary; and how do we find evidence in the archaeological record?

On the last, textiles will survive in anaerobic (eg waterlogged), frozen and dry conditions. They will rot in mild damp conditions and where open to the sun, animals and pests. In wet and alkaline conditions, animal remains disappear, but plant remains survive; wet and acid conditions destroy plant remains but preserve animal remains – for example a Bronze Age (c. 1300 BC) woollen string skirt in Denmark.

Almost no clothing has been found, but mineralised textile fragments may be found associated with metal, notably from the Anglo-Saxon period, and the weave seen at least under the microscope (note the dangers of over-cleaning metal). Actual pieces of string have been dated to 1900 years ago in Israel and 1700 years ago at Lascaux (triple cord). The structure of the string and the type of weave are used for dating.

Other evidence comes from spindle whorls, perforated items, fish hooks and arrows, all of which required string for use. Perforated objects from Austria have been dated to 300,000 years ago, and in the Czech Republic textile impressions on fired clay show twisted fibres of 26,000 years ago. Prof Soffer in "Current Anthropology" No. 41 states that fine ivory eyed needles "were ubiquitous in later Upper Palaeolithic sites (26-25,000 BP) indicating extensive sewing and possibly embroidery". A necklace of slate has been found at Star Carr.

Carvings can also offer clues: the carved bone "Venus" of Lespurgue, France of 27-20,000 years ago wears a string skirt, which must be of plant fibres, and the Venus of Willendorf of the same period appears to wear a woven cap.

Ancient Egypt offers evidence from about 5000 BC – flax was most often used for weaving and hemp for baskets. Writings state that there were 4 standards of cloth: flax can provide fine linen if harvested before the seeds are ready; by the time they are ripe the stem is thicker and would make sacking. Wall paintings show spinning, a loom appears on a pot and a model of a weaving workshop has been found, and in addition some grave figurines have a net on their back.

String can be made by twisting plant fibres together – for example flax stems are dried and allowed to rot before the fibres are pulled out. The earliest string was made from plants: flax, hemp and nettle, with different plants for different purposes. Wool can also be prepared, but Palaeolithic sheep wool was much heavier than today and more difficult to twist. Even Anglo-Saxon wool was different from ours. Archers say that animal string is needed for bow strings.

S spun string is twisted anti-clockwise, as on the thigh, Z spun is twisted clockwise on a spindle, (the letters indicate the shape seen in the string) and to make thicker cord, strings twisted oppositely must be combined. Nets, other strings and cords can then be made. Weaving requires two sets of threads and a few sticks.

For the clothes that were made we have to rely on deductions made from illustrations, but Anne believes that, since flint knives can cut accurately and it is easy to add decoration, clothes, shaving and hair cuts go much further back than we thought – remember Urtzi had short hair and wore trousers.

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

On the 17th February, Ian Sanderson from Rheesearch took us through the types of survey they undertake, including diagrams of typical magnetometry readings and the layout of resistivity probes.

Magnetometry measures the difference in the magnetic fields between 2 sensors 1 metre apart, one above the other, each measuring the magnetic field at its level. The lower readings (1 - 15 nT) indicate ditches, 20 – 100 nT fired material (eg bricks) and 500 – 3000 nT ferrous object(s). A grid 20 m sq is laid out with lines at 2m intervals. The operator of the Fluxgate gradiometer then walks up and down taking readings at 4 – 8 metre intervals. The equipment is not attached to anything. A white halo on the plot of results shows a strong signal.

Resistivity measures the resistance in the ground to electrical currents. A grid and walking pattern similar to that for magnetometry is used, but distance is limited by the length of cable, which is attached to transmitting electrodes. Soil conditions affect this technique, such as rain or the amount of salt added over time. The resulting plot can be adjusted to allow for known geology and grids can be added together to show the wider pattern. A variation of resistivity is the Wenner inversion, a vertical diagram through the soil. This can show the depth of a feature, but other uses are still being investigated.

We were then invited to discuss the interpretation of the plots of a number of sites, including that of a square feature on Magog Down.

VAL WHITAKER MEMORIAL PRIZE

In this third year of the competition, nine applications have been received. They are currently being assessed and the award will be made at the AGM.

CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Antiquarian Society lectures are held in the Law Faculty Building, West Road, Cambridge at 6.00 p.m. on Mondays. Members of the Group are eligible to attend and the programme continues with:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 12 April | Dr Stephen Alford on <i>Finding Nicholas Berden: the career of a Elizabethan spy</i> |
| 10 May | Prof Simon Keynes on <i>John Mitchell Kemble (1807-57): Apostle, Revolutionary and Anglo-Saxonist</i> |
| 7 June | Richard Mortimer and Alex Pickstone on <i>Further excavations at the War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge</i> |

The Spring conference will be held on Saturday, 17 April at the Faculty of Law, West Road, Cambridge, with the theme *Past relations: different approaches to the dead over time*. There will be 6 talks; registration is from 9.30am and the conference closes at 5.00pm. Cost £8.50 for CAS members/affiliates, plus £6.50 for a sandwich lunch if required.

LOCAL EVENTS

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 10 April | Archaeology display and exhibition of past excavations in the Eynesbury (St Neots) area – Eynesbury Methodist Church, Berkley Street, Eynesbury. 10am-4pm |
| 10 April | Finds identification day at Ely Museum. 10am-1pm |
| 13-17 April | Archaeology display and exhibition of past excavations in the Eynesbury area - St Neots Museum. 11am-4pm |
| 24 April | Guided walk of approximately 2 hours over heathland on Therfield Heath, Royston, Hertfordshire with Dr Stewart Byrant, PhD, Head of the Historic Environment Unit at Hertfordshire County. Start at 2:00pm from the public car park next to the sports club (grid ref: 3370 4030) on the A505 west of Royston. CBA Mid Anglia organised. |

- 28 April Guided walk around medieval earth works at Landbeach. Meet at the Granary outside Worts Barn, High Street 7pm
- 3 May Reach Fayre – meet archaeologists; “Hands on History” sessions; guided walk of Devil’s Dyke. 11am-4pm
- 15 May Finds identification day at St Neots Museum. 11am-1pm
- 19 May Guided walk round Roman barrows at Bartlow Hills (near Linton). Meet Bartlow church entrance 7pm
- 26 May Guided walk along Car Dyke Roman canal. Meet at car park on Waterbeach recreation ground 7pm

CONFERENCES/COURSES

- 10 April Cambridgeshire Association for Local History conference on *Rivers, Railways and Robbers* at St Peter’s Hall, March. For details see: <http://www.calh.org.uk>
- 5 June Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies AGM, Institute of Classical Studies, University of London
- 5 – 30 July *Ancient Egypt and the Mediterranean World*. Bloomsbury summer schools, UCL, London. See www.egyptology-uk.com/bloomsbury
- 3-5 September *The theory and practice of archaeological excavation*. Cambridge University ICE

PART-TIME STUDY

From Monday 19 April, 7.15pm-9.15pm. *Historic peoples*. (for Cambridge ICE Certificate in Archaeology). 12 meetings and 2 field trips. For more details, see: www.cont-ed.cam.ac.uk

Archaeology: the science of investigation – Open University course starting May 2010 (register by 14/5/10). See britarch.net/lla

From 22 April for 10 weeks at Peterborough College of Adult Education: *An introduction into the archaeology of Roman Britain*. For details see: www.pals.ac.uk

FIELDWORK OPPORTUNITIES

Details of digs can be found at: www.ilovethepast.com (through *Current Archaeology*) and www.britarch.ac.uk/briefing (CBA), also: archaeology.about.com

Opportunities include the Winchester to London Roman Road; lost Medieval village at Parham House, West Sussex; Roman villa and Iron Age settlement at Piddington, Northamptonshire; Roman cemetery in York; Burgess Park, Southwark, London; medieval and Tudor houses, Copped Hall, nr Epping, Essex

Also, in June a fieldschool will be held in Italy on *The Etruscans in Marsiliana* (Tuscany). Details available.

EXHIBITIONS

Assembling Bodies – Art, Science and Imagination: Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology until December 2010.

Redesigned Greek and Roman galleries now open at the Fitzwilliam Museum

The Jorvik Viking Centre, York has reopened following redevelopment

18 objects from the Staffordshire hoard are on display at the British Museum until 17 April

Also at the British Museum, the Kingdom of Ife: sculptures from West Africa until 6 June

1st May sees the re-opening of the upper gallery at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford with all types of functional and ceremonial weaponry

NEWS

The first near-complete Roman lantern has been found in Glemsford, Suffolk. Copper alloy and very similar to one excavated at Pompeii, it is thought to date from the first to third centuries AD. It is expected to be displayed in Ipswich Museum later this year, after conservation.

New visitor facilities, including parking, for Stonehenge have finally been approved. They will be at Airman's Corner, 2.5km west of the stones, and will be accompanied by a proposed driving prohibition on the A344 as it passes Stonehenge and two nearby byways.

BALDOCK EXCAVATIONS 1978-1994

Volume 1 of a projected series of publications is now available, at a discounted price of £17.50 + p&p until 15 May, from Letchworth Museum and Art Gallery. It covers the excavation of an Iron Age and Romano-British cemetery at Wallington Road. Further details available on request.

WEB SITES

Archlib.britarch.net : contains the contents of regional journals

Britarch.ac.uk/info/mags.html : guide to online journals and magazines

www.bbc.co.uk/archive/chronicle : a selection of the Chronicle series available online

<http://www.openarchive.co.uk> A digital archive of heritage – reports of fieldwork and documentary research

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/leisure/archives/visiting/crocambridge.htm> For details of the current opening hours at Cambridgeshire Archives

CBA MID ANGLIA

CAFG has group membership of the Council of British Archaeology (CBA) and we are in the CBA Mid Anglia region. There has been a lot of discussion recently about the regional organisation of CBA and the result is that sometime this year CBA East Anglia will merge with CBA Mid Anglia to form CBA East. As a first step towards establishing better communication with members and groups, a web site has been developed. In future we hope this will contain interesting articles from throughout the new region, and no doubt a link to what we hope will be our re-vamped CAFG web site.

The web site is: <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/cbama/> and includes details of the guided walk on Therfield Heath on 24 April

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

British Archaeology January/February and March/April 2010

CBA Conservation, January 2010

CBA Newsletter, January 2010

English Heritage Research News winter 2009-10

Portable Antiquities and Treasure Annual Report 2007

DID YOU KNOW?

The Society for Clay Pipe Research has just celebrated its 25th anniversary. The Society is interested in all aspects of clay pipe manufacture and use and information can be found on its web pages at: www.dawnmist.demon.co.uk/scpr.htm

Susan May, Secretary