

# WAS NEWS

The newsletter of the Welwyn Archaeological Society  
Spring 2011



*Ely from the air (Photo: Ely Cathedral)*

## Editorial

### **Kris Lockyear (Director)**

As the cold and snow of winter recede into memory and the daffodils bloom, we once more reach the end of another successful lecture season. Many thanks go to Daphne Goddard, as always, for arranging such a stimulating series of talks. I hope you all enjoyed them as much as I did. The good news is that Daphne has almost finished arranging next season's lectures, and an excellent line up it is too.

I am pleased to announce that we have some new members. I wish to welcome them all to the Society. We still need to expand our membership so if you have any friends or family who would enjoy being members, please persuade them to join!

Over the winter we continued our work at Six Acres until a combination of depth and cold weather drove us from the trowel face. We have backfilled the three trenches, although the fill is standing somewhat proud. I am keeping my fingers crossed that the soil will subside. We hope to be able to do more work on the site. In particular, we want to extend the geophysics

into the neighboring fields but this will have to wait until the current crop is harvested.

It is a shame that we did not sell enough tickets for the trip to Chatsworth to go ahead. I hope that our planned trip to Anglesey Abbey and Ely on the 9<sup>th</sup> will go ahead as planned. Please note that the start time is slightly later than normal: 9.30am at Welwyn, 9.40 at WGC.

This summer will see both the *Welwyn Festival* and the *Festival of British Archaeology*. For the Welwyn Festival we plan to be digging some more 1m<sup>2</sup> test holes for CORS. Please come and join in! For the latter event we are hoping to give some talks about our work in the WADS area, and a guided walk. If anyone has ideas for events we can run during these two festivals, or would like to help, please get in touch with any of the Committee.

Merle Rook has been going through fifty years worth of diaries extracting information relating to the history of the Society. She would love to hear from older or past members who have memories of working with the Society they would like to share.

I wish you all the best of summers.

# The next WAS outing: Anglesey Abbey and Ely



*Anglesey Abbey. Photograph by Daniel Stefan Gandolfo, reproduced with permission.*

## **Anglesey Abbey**

Anglesey Priory, renamed Anglesey Abbey in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had its origins as an Augustinian Priory founded in 1236. The construction works were paid for by selling 600 sheep! The priory was, however, dissolved in 1536 by Henry VIII and the site was bought by the Parker family who turned it into a country home, a fate which befell many monastic sites, such as Audley End.

In 1625, the house was bought by one Thomas Hobson, who had made his fortune running a mail service between London and Cambridge. His horses were also for hire by students and staff at the University, but he found that the best horses were overworked. He developed a strict rotation system which led to the phrase “Hobson’s choice”, this one or none!

In 1848 the house was bought by the Reverend John Hailstone, who is probably

responsible for the current name. His son wrote the definitive history of the site, which was published in 1873.

*The rather grand bureau. Photo by Karen Roe, reproduced with permission.*



*The formal gardens at Anglesey Abbey are a delight. Photo by Karen Roe, reproduced with permission.*

In 1926, the site was bought by Lord Fairhaven and his brother, Henry Broughton. They were attracted to the estate because it was close to Newmarket and the races. They undertook major works at the house but were careful to retain as much of the original fabric as possible. In 1966, upon the death of Lord Fairhaven, the site was given to the National Trust.

The gardens at the Abbey are known especially for roses and dahlias. Unfortunately, we will be too early for those and too late for the snowdrops, but hopefully there will be plenty of flowers in bloom in the delightful landscaped gardens.

## *Ely*

Ely Cathedral was founded by St Etheldreda as a monastery/nunnery of which she became abbess in AD 673. St Etheldreda, also known as Æthelthryth or Audrey, died of a tumour in her neck. It was claimed that this was in divine punishment for wearing neck-



*The cathedral from across the meadows.*

laces in her earlier days, although in fact a number of nuns died from a plague at that time. Much later, poor quality silk and lace necklaces were sold at St Audrey's fair and this is the derivation of the word "tawdry" from St Audrey.

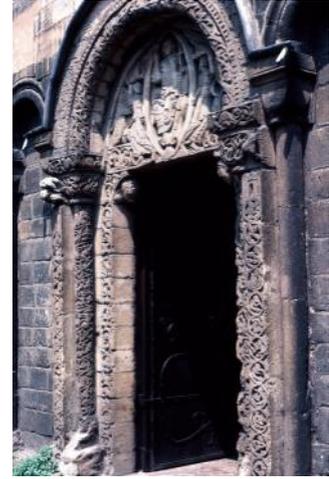
The abbey was destroyed in 870 by the Danes and then re-founded in 970 by the Benedictines. The abbey grew in importance quickly and in 1109 became the Cathedral Priory. The present building was begun in c. 1083 by Abbot Simeon. It was started at the east end, which was then later replaced.

One of the delights of the cathedral is the Prior's door which dates to c. 1150. The



*The view down the nave of Ely Cathedral.*

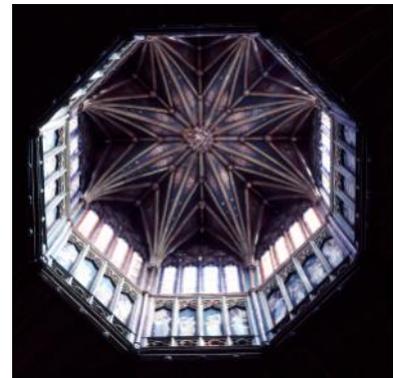
*The Prior's door, Ely.*



door is surrounded by Romanesque carvings and contains a depiction of Christ in Majesty in the tympanum.

In 1322 a disaster struck the cathedral when the central tower collapsed. Digging the foundations of the Lady Chapel, which is unusually sited to the north of the main church building, had weakened the foundations of the crossing. This disaster, however, created the need for Ely's unique feature: the central octagon. One bay of each

*The octagon*



of the four arms of the crossing was cleared away, resulting in an octagon with eight arches leading up to the timber lantern above. The lantern was designed by William Hurley, who later became Master Carpenter to the King. It was essentially complete by 1340.

The abbey was damaged in 1539 during the dissolution of the monasteries, but the cathedral was quickly re-founded in 1541. Many of the monastic buildings were converted to other uses, and the Lady Chapel was used as the parish church until 1938.

## Three very different talks: notes from the members' evening

Our members' evening held on 25th Feb 2011 was a great success with three very different talks, all fascinating in their own right. I have done my best to summarise them here for those who missed the evening.

First up was Les Mather, "Our Derbyshire Correspondent." Since moving 'oop north' Les has been involved with local archaeology there as well as here. Last summer Les worked on the excavations at Fin Cop. This site is an Iron Age hillfort in



*The view down Monsal Dale*

the Derbyshire hills with amazing views in almost every direction, including to the famous 1863 viaduct in Monsal Dale. The site had a number of visible earthworks and is one of a number of Iron Age hillforts in the region. The work was organized by the Longstone Local History Group and funded by the lottery.

Initial work at the site included a magnetometry survey over the interior and the defences of the site. This led to excavations in the summer of 2010. The trenches across



*A trench across the main ramparts showing the rock cut ditch and the stone faced rampart.*



*One of the victims of the Fin Cop massacre.*

the main ramparts showed that the inner rampart was built c. 440 BC and was completed with a rock cut ditch and limestone facing. The secondary outer rampart, however, was never completed. It was probably dug c. 330 BC. More disconcerting were the nine skeletons of women and children recovered from the ditch. These people seem to have met an unfortunate end. They represent the clearest evidence I have seen for a prehistoric massacre.

For many years Nick Tracken has been helping a project to conserve architectural elements from domestic architecture. In his talk he concentrated on discussing how one can date windows in London.

Subsequent to the Fire of London in 1666, domestic architecture in London was built of brick. In an attempt to stop anything like the Great Fire breaking out again,



*The windows on the left pre-date those on the right.*

a number of regulations were brought in regarding windows, and it is these that help us date them. From the time of the fire until 1709, window frames in London were built flush with the wall. New legislation then resulted in windows being set back 4" from the wall face. In 1774 the law changed again and the frames were set 4" back and 4" into the wall leaving just the sash visible.



*Sorting out the development of a building is not always easy.*

The abolition of the glass tax in 1845 led to a 75% drop in glass prices and larger panes. The sash windows were not rigid enough to support these larger panes and so from about then, “horns” are to be found on the bottom of sashes to help strengthen them. Of course, in many cases earlier windows will contain later replacement sashes.



*A candidate for the most squeezed in building in London? Note the “horns” on the bottom of the sash and the large glass panes.*

Tony Rook completed the evening with his recent trip to Libya. As part of his research into Roman architecture and, more specifically, the technology of Roman bath houses, Tony had long wanted to visit Libya and the famed Hunting Baths at Lepcis Magna. Last October/November he finally had his chance. How lucky that he managed to get his visit in before the current conflict broke out.

Tony joined a group visiting the site from Rome and was able to stay in the museum accommodation, along with an impressive selection of cockroaches. The site at Lepcis is, however, quite impressive although much remains to be excavated. As well as visiting many sites at Lepcis includ-



*The Hunting Baths*

ing the Hunting Baths, the Hadrianic baths, the harbour and the basilica/forum complex, Tony also undertook trips to visit the nearby city of Sabrathra and the villa at Silin.

The trip did suggest a solution to one of the problems Tony had been investigating: how did the vertical flue tiles vent? At the Hadrianic baths at Lepcis the flues



*The hexagonal public toilets at Sabathra.*

under the windows clearly vent into horizontally laid flue tiles. The visit did raise another question, however. What did Lepcis use for roof tiles? The small quantity Tony observed at the site was clearly insufficient for a major town.



*Eureka! A detail of the flues in the Hadrianic baths at Lepcis Magna help solve the problem of how they were vented.*

# The coarse pottery from School Close, Welwyn

by Clare Lewis

Many of you will remember the dig we did in the allotments near Hawbush Close, Welwyn — the infamous “Great White Hole”. The Society began excavating there in 1990, finding a cremation grave (Fig 1) and a grave containing a skeleton, these are now displayed at the Welwyn Roman Baths. We began digging there again in 2001 and continued until 2007. We excavated a deep chalk ditch/pit and found eight more graves dug into the chalk at the bottom.



**Figure 1:** the pottery from the original cremation grave found in 1990.

A considerable amount of pottery was also excavated, all of which has now been identified, weighed and counted. When we examine pottery in archaeology we begin by looking at the form — what shape it is, and the fabric — what sort of clay it has been made from, what has been added to the clay and how has it been fired. When the clay is being prepared for use, a filler or temper is added to prevent the pots from shattering in the kiln, and give them strength. Sand is the most common temper in the Roman period although shell and grog (ground pot) were also used. Using all this information it is possible to determine where a pot was made, what it was used for and how old it is. Data provided by pottery analysis is therefore a very useful tool in determining the age of the site, what was happening on the site and how it developed.

A total of 11,258 sherds of pottery weighing 108.5kg were recovered from the site, much of it made fairly locally. Roman Hertfordshire had two major pottery production centres, one based in the region around Verulamium (St Albans), the other in the Much Hadham area. The pottery from these two areas are quite different in form and fabric; commonly the Verulamium wares are white or pale pink, with a coarse granular texture and quite hard, whereas the Hadham wares have a fine sandy texture, are either fired to a grey or a red colour and are generally softer. As expected the pottery from these two regions dominate the assemblage from School Close.

The most frequently occurring type of pot in Verulamium white ware is the reed rimmed bowl (Fig. 2), often with burning marks on the exterior surface, an indication that these deep bowls were used for cooking. This style of bowl was made in the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The other distinctive form found on the site is the ring neck flagon, this vessel was used for serving drinks, and was also produced in the same period as the reed rimmed bowl. The production of Verulamium pottery declined after about 160 AD.



**Figure 2:** Reed rimmed bowls.

The Hadham industry produced pots throughout the Roman period but their production was at its peak in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>



**Figure 3:**  
*Verulamium white ware ring-necked flagon*

**Figure 4:**  
*Hadham ware oxidized jar.*

centuries. Hadham produced a different style of pots, most common were the grey ware jars, many rims of these were found at our site, they are more difficult to date as similar styles were made throughout the Roman period. The style of platters that we found was datable to the late 1<sup>st</sup>/early 2<sup>nd</sup> century and the form of dish can be dated to the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> to the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century. These two styles of vessel give a date range for the site of possibly more than 150 years.

Excluding large storage jars the weight of pottery from Verulamium accounts for 22.8% of the total assemblage and from the Hadham region 33.4%, a further 37.3% is represented by other locally made sand and grog tempered pottery. A significant amount of grog tempered pottery was found. This pottery is associated with the late Iron Age going through to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Although this was found throughout the fill of the pit there was a concentration of it at the bottom, matching the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC–1<sup>st</sup> century AD radiocarbon date given to the skeletons.

Only 6.5% of the Romano-British pottery was imported from other regions. Highgate Wood pottery is the most frequently found of these fabrics, with beakers being the most numerous form, produced from 120–160 AD. The shell tempered ware is all from the Bedfordshire kilns around Harrold, the yellowish buff colour is associated with production in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Small amounts of colour coated ware (all rough

cast beakers) London pottery and glazed ware were present but not in significant quantities (less than 1%). Apart from the samian ware (the red shiny pottery), only a few sherds of imported wares were present and these were from northern and central France. Large numbers of sherds from large, grog tempered storage jars (used for grain) were present, comprising a substantial portion of the assemblage (17% by sherd count). A high proportion we found was in poor condition, the sherds are small with a high level of abrasion, leaving the pottery with rounded edges and often little of the surface remaining. The pottery is not stratified according to date (except for the very bottom), each context contains pottery that could be from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.



**Figure 5:** *Typical examples of pottery from the School Close site.*

The conclusions that can be reached about the site are:

- The unstratified nature of most of the pottery and its poor condition, indicate that it is substantially residual.
- Activity on the site began in the late Iron Age, when the first graves were dug into the chalk.
- The pit began to be filled sometime in the first quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.
- The period when deposition seems to be at its peak is the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century. It is probable that the deposition on the site had slowed by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and ceased soon after as there is no evidence of typically later 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century forms of pottery.

## Recent Roman finds from Welwyn

Many of you may have read about the recent finds in Welwyn published in the *Welwyn Hatfield Times* on March 2nd. I was contacted by the developers, Netherdown (Herts) Ltd, with images of some of the finds and some of the preliminary conclusions from the work. They are awaiting the final report from Archaeological Solutions Ltd (who are, in fact, the Herts Archaeo-



logical Trust rebranded!). Amongst the finds was samian ware (no surprise there), as well as tweezers, a brooch and a cosmetic grinder. Netherdown have kindly allowed me to reproduce some of the images here. It is a shame that we were not consulted while the work was going on, and hopefully in future this will be resolved. More worryingly, the *WHT* also reports (p. 14) that some of the finds “are being given to new homeowners... while others are being sent to Mill Green Museum.” Surely, the entire archive should be kept together at the Museum?

*Finds from Welwyn. From left to right: Samian bowl stamped CETTAS F, a pair of tweezers, and a cosmetic grinder.*

### Shorter notes

#### The Iron Age in the Thames Valley

I attended this very interesting day school run by the Prehistoric Society on 26th Feb. The papers before lunch concentrated on the Upper Thames, particularly for the middle Iron Age, whereas the afternoon session looked at the lower Thames including Kent, Hertfordshire and Essex. Stewart Bryant and Isobel Thompson talked about Hertfordshire and in particular its missing middle Iron Age. It appears that it is less “missing” and more “unrecognized.” Isobel has been noticing a middle IA component in the larger late IA pottery assemblages found

on commercial projects. It is salutary to see that the pattern of late IA settlements in Herts reflects the distribution of *archaeologists* more than *archaeology*.

#### Geophysics At Verulamium

UCL, Birkbeck and WAS undertook some geophysics at Verulamium. The survey, part of a UCL course, took place over 3 days in February. I would like to thank Simon West for helping set up the course, Clare Lewis for helping hugely, and Bercu Urundul for gathering support from her fellow students. Hopefully, this could be the start of a collaborative project between UCL, WAS and Verulamium.

#### *Next season*

The first lecture of the 2011–2012 season will be on Friday 30th September 2011 in the Free Church Hall, Church Road, WGC starting at 7.45pm.

#### *Contact*

Kris Lockyear can be contacted at [Noviodunum@hotmail.com](mailto:Noviodunum@hotmail.com) or on 01582 831946. Clare Lewis can be contacted at [wasmembership@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wasmembership@hotmail.co.uk) or on 01920 830798.

#### *Fancy a walk?*

Bercu Urundul, writes: “I am going to be leading a walk for Welwyn Walks on the 10th of April from Ayot Green, meeting at the Waggoners at 10:30am. If anyone would like to join the walk, I’d be delighted. I am hoping to complete 7.5 miles, finishing at the Waggoners for rest and drinks. The more the merrier. It is all in aid of preparation and practice for my 14 mile