



## **A note from the President**

I thought we should start off this year of membership with an update on what plans the BWAS Committee have for improving the Society and improving its profile. The Committee have been aware for a long time that, along with many local archaeological societies across the country, membership of the Society has declined and lecture attendance is often very low. One priority is, therefore, to improve this situation.

Since I became President in December 2012, we have had several difficulties to overcome; the loss of the old Library Theatre, the loss of the Studio Theatre in the new Central Library and the loss of links with the Central Library's local history lecture programme, the closure of Birmingham Archaeology and the drastic reduction in archaeology, particularly British archaeology, at the University of Birmingham.

So, what have we been up to? We have had a stand at the last two CBA West Midlands day-schools (2015 and 2016) to try to promote the Society and its Transactions. It was surprising, to me at least, how many people were unaware of the Society's existence. We have also been trying to devise the best strategies for publicising the Society's activities generally. The Society has featured in last year's Birmingham Heritage Week - this year running Sept 8th to the 18th - with a lecture and a 'walk and talk' thanks to Mike Hodder. Unfortunately, we will not be able to participate this year but this is only a temporary 'blip'.

The BMI has recently appointed a new director and there are opportunities for mutually beneficial links here too, and the 'Wellington Group', formed last year, hopes to establish greater ties between BWAS, Worcestershire Archaeological Society and Staffordshire Historical and Archaeological Society.

We have been trying to make more use of digital technology for publicity - although hard-copy versions of things like the Newsletter will be available to those unfamiliar with computers, email and the internet. The new BWAS website (thanks to Walter Newton and Amanda Forster) has been a welcome digital addition that we are hoping to capitalise on further. Also on the digital side of things, we are planning to digitise all the back issues of the Transactions up to 2010. These will be curated by the Archaeological Data Service, University of York and will be in pdf format and open access, free of charge. This will bring us into line with many local and national societies. The programme of digitisation will take some time to accomplish but with a good wind we should have the task accomplished by 2020, making a good 150th birthday present for BWAS! In the meantime, we have started to upload the contents of each 'Transactions' onto the BWAS website.

At the most basic level, the Committee has reviewed the Society's finances and where possible simplified them - although streamlining still continues under the guidance of Amanda Forster, Peter King and Caroline Raynor. We are also planning to revise the Society's constitution to bring it up-to-date with the 21st century. We also felt that in view of our charitable status we really did need some sort of safeguarding policy, especially when it comes to excursions and fieldwork, and Caroline Rann is currently working on a suitable document.

This year Caroline Rann struggled womanfully to draw up a possible excursion itinerary - and very good it looked too - but was thwarted by lack of responses from those in charge of the sites. We are, however, hoping to re-establish this side of our activities that had rather fallen



## **Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society**

**President: Stephanie Rátkai**

into a decline. We have two excursions lined up; one to Wall (Letocetum) following Mike Hodder's talk in October and one to Coventry led by George Demidowicz.

We are also striving to reinvigorate our communications with members, to keep you in the picture as to events, activities and archaeological news.

Our newest innovation, spearheaded by Sue Whitehouse, is '**See It For Free**'. The aim of SIFF is to provide a series of archaeological walks in Birmingham and Warwickshire covering all periods. The walks are described in detail, with a carefully mapped out route and with links to other websites. The map, details of how to get to the site(s) and the route and description of the monument(s) will be in pdf format and available on our website. The pdf can be downloaded and printed out. We hope to have the first SIFF walks ready soon.

The lecture series for 2016-2017 has been arranged with topics ranging from the palaeolithic (Bradgate Park) and neolithic (Stonehenge) to Roman cemeteries (Upper Thames Valley) and settlement (Wall, Staffordshire) to medieval barns, a nunnery, a mysterious village, and the home of Lady Jane Grey. As always full details of the lectures are available on the BWAS website.

Finally, as part of the Society's aim to promote archaeology and safeguard the heritage, I have commented on planning proposals for the wholesale markets area of Birmingham - site of the moated manor of the de Birmingham - on behalf of BWAS, and have written to my MP and local councillors regarding new planning legislation, 'The Neighbourhood and Planning Infrastructure Bill' which replaces the old Planning Policy Guidelines. Many organisations involved in archaeology and heritage matters see in this a weakening of control over development and the subsequent potential loss of archaeological and other information about our past.

So, as you can see we have been busy! I like to think of the committee as a swan, serene and unruffled above the water, paddling furiously beneath the surface!

All that remains for me to do is to thank each and every one of the committee for all their work. *Per ardua ad astra!*

**Stephanie Rátkai**, BWAS President

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## **2016-2017 Membership Renewals**

It's that time of year again! Subscription renewal forms are included in this mailing, please look over the renewal form, complete and sign before sending back to us. Many thanks to all those who have already paid their BWAS annual subscription by Standing Order. If you have already paid us, please do still check the details are correct on the form (such as your contact details) and update us with any changes.

**Pay by Standing Order:** For those that have already paid, the form should say 'PAID' in the amount due box – please get in touch if you would like a receipt and we can send one out to you. You may have a Standing order set up which will be paid sometime soon, if we think you have, it should say 'Yes' in the Standing Order box. If you think your payment has been made and would like to check we have received it, just get in touch.

**Underpayment:** A few people who have paid by Standing Order are still paying out-of-date subscription rates, please check the form as you may still owe some funds. You will see any



**Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society**  
President: **Stephanie Rátkai**

owed amount from current and previous years in the relevant boxes, and the fee now required in the 'Total now due' section. If you could arrange to pay outstanding fees and update your Standing Order to the correct amount, we would be very grateful!

**Cash, BACS or cheque:** For those members who normally pay by cheque, cash or online using BACS, you will find all the details you need on the renewals form. It is not a problem to pay by cash or cheque, and if you would like to bring your fee and form along to the firm meeting in October, please do.

**Gift Aid:** Finally, the form also indicates if we have a Gift Aid form linked to your membership. Gift Aid is a really useful way for the Society to increase the value of your membership subscription – if you are eligible and would like to help, simply complete the Gift Aid form included in this mailing and send in with your form. Also, if you are no longer eligible, please let me know and I can update your member profile.

Thanks for your continued support for the Society! Please get in touch if you have any queries about your subscription or membership, we're happy to help ☺

**Manda Forster, Treasurer**

Treasurer@bwas-online.co.uk

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## **Read all about it! Transactions Volume 118**

**Mike Hodder**, Vice President

Transactions Volume 118 contains three articles on sites in mid-Warwickshire, Atherstone and Birmingham, and includes Bronze Age pits, Iron Age and Roman farms and fields, Anglo-Saxon finds, and a 19th century glassworks. Production of the Transactions has been an important activity of the Society ever since it was founded over 100 years ago, and the aim is to publish a volume each year. *Transactions* contains reports on archaeological investigations in Birmingham, Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire, and reviews of local archaeology and history books. Nowadays, the reports are predominantly about work carried out as part of development, as a requirement of the planning process. Developers are required to meet the cost of excavation, analysis of the results and publication of the report. Reports in Transactions are a long-term record of research for future consultation as well as for immediate reading, so they inevitably contain technical detail, but don't let that deter you from reading them! These summaries of articles in the current volume provide a "taster" to encourage you to delve into *Transactions*.

Soil stripping for road construction south of Warwick, including the excavation of "borrow pits" (to obtain soil to build embankments), revealed many archaeological features, none of which was visible on aerial photographs or in geophysical survey. The results are described in "Prehistoric and Roman occupation near Sherbourne: excavations at Junction 15 of the M40 motorway with the A46 trunk road, 2008/8" by Stuart Joyce and Andrew Mudd. The earliest features were three pits which contained heat-shattered stone and charcoal and were radiocarbon-dated to the middle Bronze Age. Although they are related to well-known burnt mounds of the region, no mounds accompanied these pits. In the middle Iron Age, an enclosure containing at least two houses was connected to a boundary ditch, and in the late Iron Age and early Roman period enclosures and ditched fields were created. In the late 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> century an extensive system of ditched rectangular plots was laid out. Stock-rearing may have been the mainstay of the economy.



## **Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society**

**President: Stephanie Rátkai**

Although the Staffordshire Hoard has attracted much attention and public interest, the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon period in the region is generally much less spectacular but no less significant, as described in "Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon, and medieval archaeology at Rowlands Way, Atherstone, Warwickshire", by Anthony Mustchin. Roman features, pottery, and roof tiles suggesting a Roman building were found on this site, but the most important discoveries were pits, postholes, a boundary ditch and a pond which all contained Anglo-Saxon objects including doughnut-shaped clay loom weights, pottery including some pieces with stamped decoration, and a Roman glass setting that may have been reused in Anglo-Saxon jewellery. Taken together, these albeit sparse remains indicate an Anglo-Saxon rural settlement- a rare discovery for this region- which included a pond for watering livestock with nearby timber buildings used for weaving.

The importance of Birmingham's 19th and early 20th century glassmaking industry is under-appreciated, even though some of its products are now collectors' pieces and are exhibited in applied art displays, as for example in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. "The former Soho Glassworks, Lodge Road, Hockley, Birmingham: building recording and excavation, 2008" by Ray Holt, David Dungworth and Ric Tyler, describes the investigation of a glassworks that was established in 1805. It was acquired by John Walsh in 1850 and subsequently owned by his company until its demise in 1951, producing cut and coloured glass vessels throughout this time. The glass cone and other buildings are shown on a map of 1810 and are illustrated in an advertisement of about 1855. Examination of the surviving buildings on the site before their demolition revealed, in addition to 1930s glassworks structures, 19th century tunnels running under the glass cone and other buildings to provide air and access. Excavation revealed the base of the glass cone, which had a remarkably thin wall, its central furnace and ancillary buildings including a probable annealing oven. Chemical analysis of glassworking waste showed that complex and subtle colouring had been achieved with innovative use of additives, including cobalt and manganese (for blue), selenium and cadmium (for red), and arsenic, copper and uranium (for green).

*NB If you have not received the Transactions Volume 118, sent out earlier this year, please let us know by email: [membership@bw-as-online.co.uk](mailto:membership@bw-as-online.co.uk)*

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2016**

#### **September 8–18, Birmingham Heritage Week**

During Birmingham Heritage Week you're invited to discover the history, the secrets and the places that make the city so great. Find out more: <http://birminghamheritageweek.co.uk>

#### **October 29–30, West Midlands Egyptology Conference**

The West Midlands Egyptology Society will host their first conference in October, focusing on the heritage of Egypt and the Near East. This will take place at the Gas Hall, Birmingham Museums Trust. Further information:

<https://wmegyptology.wordpress.com/wmes-first-conference/>

#### **Saturday 29 October 2016, BWAS Visit to Wall Roman Site**

Start 2pm at Wall Museum, Watling Street, Wall (near Lichfield) WS14 0AW. (There is a car park a short distance from the Museum). Finish about 4pm. Free, no need to book in advance. Led by Mike Hodder, this will consist of a short introductory talk in the Museum followed by a guided walk which will include the excavated remains of the baths and mansio, the site of the Roman forts and the late Roman "burgus".



## **BWAS Lecture series 2016-2017**

*All lectures take place at*  
Birmingham and Midland Institute (BMI), Margaret Street, Birmingham, B3 3BS

### **Tuesday 4 October 2016 7pm-8pm**

*Mansio, Medieval Pottery, M6 Toll and Museum: a personal perspective on Wall Roman site (Letocetum), Staffordshire*  
With Dr. Mike Hodder

Wall originated as a series of 1st-century Roman forts on a hilltop overlooking Watling Street. A small town which developed outside the forts included a bath house and mansio (an inn). At the end of the 3rd century a walled enclosure or burgus was built astride Watling Street. Excavations along the line of the M6 Toll motorway near Wall revealed a Roman cemetery and a pottery kiln.

In addition to a summary of the Roman sites in and around Wall as part of the Roman West Midlands, this lecture will consider Wall before and after the Romans, interpretation and display of the site and finds, and some questions for future research.

Mike dug at Wall in the 1970s and he regards it as a formative site in his career. He was involved with the M6 Toll when he was Birmingham City Council's archaeologist, and he is now a member of the Friends of Letocetum who man Wall museum and promote the site.

This lecture forms an introduction to the **Society's excursion to Wall on Saturday 29 October** (meet at Wall Museum 2pm) which will consist of a visit to the Museum and a guided walk.

### **Tuesday 1 November 2016, 7pm-8pm**

*The Recording and Identification of Barns*  
With Ken Bonham

A paper by Francis B. Andrews, a former President of the Society, for BWAS in 1900 described a number of major barns which had been lost and some which were still in existence. He talked about their importance and the need to preserve them. Francis B Andrews was in fact the president of BWAS.

Horn & Born were two American researchers who did major work on Medieval European Monasteries and produced a monograph "The Barns of the Abbey of Beaulieu at its Granges of Beaulieu St. Leonards and Great Coxwell". They used the structural details of the existing barn at Great Coxwell plus archaeology to hypothesise the structure of the great barn at Beaulieu St. Leonards. F.W.B Charles had recorded details of the barn at Bredon just before a



**Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society**  
President: Stephanie Rátkai

fire destroyed most of the roof. He was able to use his research to reconstruct the barn using new timbers spliced into the surviving ones. Another barn at Pilton in Somerset suffered a similar fate and was also restored through the use of local research.

Cecil Hewett researched the structural joints in the barns of Essex from the 11th to the 11th century to posit a chronology of the development in carpentry and thus date other timber-framed barns. S.E. Rigold did similar work in Kent. There is still much to learn, particularly in the origin and development of cruck-framed barns and the raised-cruck roof.

A number of previously unrecorded barns have recently been excavated, from possible Roman and Saxon ones to later stone foundations as at Southam in Warwickshire. Problems in identifying and dating such finds are: for timber ones the fact that early barns were probably earthfast and so have rotted away completely except for post holes and for both timber and stone barns, the fact that they were used for storage and processing of crops and unless they burnt down, all the organic evidence has gone and there are usually no domestic small finds. The surviving ones were also constantly repaired and modified, but whereas in the case of the manor house, this was probably done for reasons of comfort, fashion and convenience so that alterations can aid in dating, in the case of barns they were pragmatic, ad hoc and responding to the agricultural needs of the time, of which, in the absence of farm records, there is no evidence.

The recording and identification of barns is important archaeologically because it has been estimated that we have lost between 50% and 70% of the barns in England yet for 900 years they were one of the most important buildings in the rural economy. Being able to locate their position, size, structure and date is important to understanding the economy and infrastructure of any community from the Anglo-Saxon period to at least the middle of the 19th century.

*The talk will be illustrated and Ken will also be bringing some scale models of some of the barns to view after the lecture.*



**Tuesday 6 December 2016 6.45pm-8pm**  
(including BWAS AGM, 6.45pm -7pm)

*New towns in medieval Warwickshire: the mystery of Bretford*  
With Prof. Chris Dyer

Bretford is a small hamlet in Warwickshire, lying roughly equidistant between Coventry and Rugby. A little to the south, the Fosse Way is carried over the Avon on a medieval five-arch stone bridge. Although now a very small settlement, Bretford was originally larger, a planned, early 13th-century market town, with the Fosse being diverted from its Roman line to service it. By the 15th century the town had suffered a major decline from which it never recovered.

Prof. Dyer has undertaken extensive field-walking on many medieval settlement sites in Warwickshire, including Bretford. He will present his most recent research in this lecture.

ANNUAL LUNCHTIME LECTURE

**Tuesday 10 January 2017, 1pm-2pm**

*"I have come after them and made repair": Understanding Stonehenge through petrology*

With Dr. Rob Ixer

The precise number, identity, geological provenance and prehistorical significance of the various Stonehenge bluestones have been, and will always remain, contentious, for they provide the stony springboards for speculation. Petrographical re-examination (using 'total petrography') of lithic assemblages collected during the last century, plus examination of those from 21st-century excavations, found within Stonehenge and its immediate environs (over 7000 samples), combined with dedicated, geological, *in situ* collecting has allowed a greater qualification and quantification of the rock types, demonstrated their relative archaeological 'importance' and suggested their possible origins. However, the data have also uncovered cryptic questions including

- Why are some orthostats not represented in the abundant and spatially quite uniform Stonehenge 'debitage' ...and vice versa?
- Why are the geological origins of the non-dolerite bluestone so diverse and often from 'insignificant' outcrops?

Detailed rock and mineral geochemistry plus statistical analysis of the 'debitage' may answer these and the more straightforward questions.

**Tuesday 7 February 2017, 7pm-8pm**

*Roman Burial in the Upper Thames Valley Region*  
With Paul Booth

Work in the Upper Thames Valley in the last twenty years has added considerably to our knowledge of Roman burial practice in the region, with discoveries ranging from individual burials of intrinsic interest to cemetery groups of varying sizes, mostly associated with rural settlements. The new evidence allows us to paint an improved picture of the development of 'typical' practice and therefore also enables identification of significant variation from the typical. Radiocarbon has been an important tool for dating burials in the region, with particularly significant results for the late-Roman to early post-Roman period.

**Tuesday 7 March 2017, 7pm-8pm**



**Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society**  
President: Stephanie Rátkai

*Polesworth Abbey, North Warwickshire*  
With Nicholas Palmer

A nunnery was first founded on the site in the 9th or 10th century. The abbey continued as a Benedictine nunnery until the Dissolution. Today, the ruins of the Cloister and the two storey medieval gateway are all that remain. The Parish Church of St Editha, containing some early 12th-century features, was originally the Abbey Church.

Archaeology Warwickshire conducted excavations at the abbey site in 2002-2006, and 2007, uncovering an undercroft and building remains, possibly part of the abbesses' lodgings or Guest Hall. A community archaeology programme at the abbey was run in 2011 and 2012.

**Tuesday 4 April 2017, 7pm-8pm**

*Bradgate Park, Leicestershire*  
With Dr. Richard Thomas

Bradgate Park is located 10km north-west of Leicester and covers an 830-acre recreational park which attracts c. 400,000 visitors each year. The landscape is designated as a SSSI and is described by Natural England as "one of the finest remaining examples of ancient parkland in Leicestershire". The park was first documented in 1241 but is known primarily as the location of one of the first unfortified brick-built aristocratic houses in England, which was later the birth place and childhood home of Lady Jane Grey: the 'nine days queen'. The Park is currently the focus of a major University of Leicester archaeological training excavation (2015-2019). The first two seasons of excavation have focused attention upon a medieval moated site, Bradgate House, an enclosure of uncertain date and a late Upper Palaeolithic (Creswellian) open site (c. 15,000 years old). This talk will describe the aims of the fieldschool, details the results of the first two seasons of excavation and set out future plans.

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BIRMINGHAM AND WARWICKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY (BWAS) is committed to the promotion of archaeology and to fostering an understanding of the heritage of the region.

In addition to the lecture series, the Society publishes a yearly journal, the Transactions, and a twice yearly newsletter. Where possible the Society runs excursions to sites of interest and from time to time undertakes fieldwork.

The BWAS website contains fuller details of the lectures and links to other heritage events, news about the Society and its activities and membership forms.

Current membership is £20 a year, family membership £22. BWAS members can attend the lectures free of charge (non-members £3.00) and receive a copy of the Transactions each year.