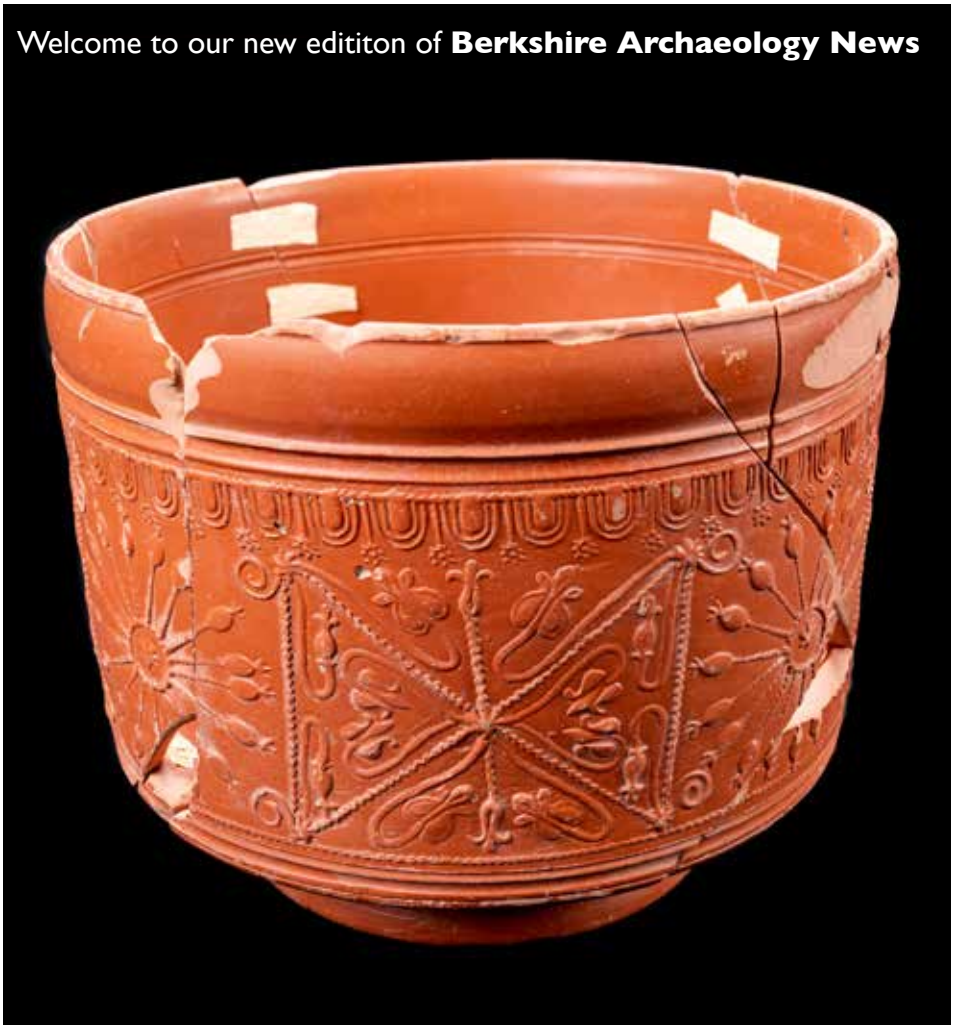


Welcome to Berkshire Archaeology's 2020 newsletter.

Our cover image is of a particularly fine, near-complete Samian bowl found north-west of Arborfield Court, along the route of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road. This fine, highly decorated vessel was found, broken, in a shallow ditch investigated as part of archaeological excavations in advance of road construction. The Samian bowl was found amongst a deliberate dump of a large quantity of other Roman pottery. The other pottery was mostly locally-produced greyware but which was also highly fragmented. Curiously the area investigated contained mostly the remains of a Late Iron Age farm. You can read more about this Iron Age site on Page 11. Why was there such a large dump of Roman pottery in a ditch on this site? It was thought that the greyware pottery may have been made locally and this was therefore a dump of poorly-fired pottery that was unusable and unsaleable. However, none of the material showed any sign of warping, fracturing or spalling, which might have caused a potter to have rejected it. Despite its fragmentary state, the Samian bowl

BERKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

Welcome to our new edition of **Berkshire Archaeology News**



Near complete Samian bowl found along the route of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road © Wessex Archaeology

remains a fine and beautiful object, even after it was buried nearly two thousand years ago near Arborfield. Our newsletter contains news of other interesting recent discoveries in east Berkshire. You can always find out more about the archaeology of your area by visiting the Heritage Gateway website www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway

We hope you enjoy our latest newsletter.

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Prehistoric Boundaries and an Unusual Building between Slough and Datchet

The Myrke is a small outlying settlement in the former parish of Upton, now part of Slough. It sits on the former road to Datchet before the arrival of the M4 saw the Datchet Road diverted to the east. Until the early 20th-century, the settlement was called 'Mirk'. Perhaps the change in spelling was to provide the residents with a more enigmatic name to the less flattering similarity to 'murk' or 'murky'. The name may actually derive from the Old English 'mearc', meaning boundary, as the settlement lies on the boundary between the former parish of Upton (now Slough) and Eton. The long history of settlement in the area was recently demonstrated by archaeological investigations in advance of the construction of a temporary compound for the M4 Smart Motorway improvements. In the triangle of land just east of The Myrke and Datchet Road, Oxford Archaeology, on behalf of Highways England and Balfour Beatty Vinci JV, found a series of repeatedly re-dug ditches running across the site. The earliest may date from the late second millennium BC (around 1,100 BC) and the ditches may have been maintained and re-dug into the later Iron Age (around 200 BC). They may have marked and separated a natural spring and stream running across the site from adjacent fields and settlement. Close to these ditches were a number of other remains, including a well, since abandoned, with the remains of a butchered cow towards the base!



Sampling a prehistoric ditch for environmental remains
© Oxford Archaeology

The foundations for an unusual rectangular building, probably prehistoric in date but possibly later © Oxford Archaeology

The remains of one building were recorded and consisted of an irregular, long, narrow rectangular structure, with only the holes and trenches for timber foundations surviving. It is an unusual building plan and its date remains

uncertain. It could be as early as the Neolithic period or as late as the Saxon or medieval period. It is hoped that charcoal, recovered from the post holes of the building, will provide radiocarbon dates to date this enigmatic structure.



The White House – A Jewel in Wokingham



Garrard family who were in possession of this country house from the mid-19th-century. Robert Garrard, the head of the house, was a jeweller and goldsmith and part of the company of Garrard the jeweller founded in London in 1753. The Company is best known for becoming the first official Crown Jeweller, appointed by Queen Victoria, and has served every British monarch since then. Benjamin Garrard, goldsmith, took over the running of the house from Robert Garrard in the later 19th-century, with his widow Blanche Garrard, being the head of the house in the early 20th-century.

The White House nestles in the triangle of land at the junction of Finchampstead Road, and Evendon's Lane, Wokingham. Now Evendons Primary School, the school buildings have a long and varied history. A building is shown on the site on Rocque's 1761 map of Berkshire but greater detail is shown on the Enclosure Map of 1817. At this time the main building would have been a country house lying south-west of the market town of Wokingham. By the later 19th-century the main building is notated on historic

mapping as Eastheath Lodge but by the early 20th-century it had become the White House. Distinguished by its white colour and timber framing, the original main building may have derived from a timber-framed building of late medieval date. The conjoining of some of the buildings, when it changed from family home to school in 1947, led to some imitation timber-framing being added, producing a very distinctive look for the building. The building is not listed but has a fascinating connection with the

Ownership in the mid-20th-century is unclear but by this time, as suburban Wokingham encroached on the countryside setting of the house, it was turned into the White House Preparatory School in 1947, before then becoming Evendons Primary School in 2014.

Aerial view of the White House Preparatory School, now Evendons Primary School, in 1952
© Historic England



Mapledurham Playing Fields in Reading Yields its Archaeological Secrets



In recent years, the playing fields of Reading have revealed an extraordinary range of previously unknown archaeological sites and monuments - an Early to Middle Iron Age (700 – 200 BC) settlement in the grounds of the former Elvian School, Southcote Lane; a Late Bronze Age (1,100 – 900 BC) roundhouse at Reading

Girls' School; Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman settlement at Ridgeway Primary School, Whitley, including the rare discovery of a hoard of Roman bronze coins in a pottery vessel; and a Late Bronze Age roundhouse and evidence of later Iron Age iron production at Crosfields School, Shinfield Road. Mapledurham Playing Fields in Caversham is no exception! Proposals for a new primary school and improved sports fields led to a programme of exploratory geophysical survey, trial trenching and excavation in 2018 and 2019. The archaeological potential of the wider area was amply demonstrated by the identification of at least two, near square, crop mark enclosures in the fields immediately to the west of the Playing Fields, just over the boundary in South Oxfordshire. The archaeological investigations at Mapledurham Playing Fields identified at least two further Roman ditched enclosures,

perhaps part of a wider Roman settlement and farming complex. Both enclosures dated to the Early Roman period (1st century AD) and probably served as paddocks or animal enclosures. There were few finds but the remains of a large jar were recorded in one enclosure ditch, suggesting settlement was not far away. The remains of two Roman cremation burials were also found nearby, one of which contained charred seeds of wild strawberry. This may have been accidentally included amongst the cremated remains or perhaps was a deliberate deposition of a favourite foodstuff of the recently departed.

A trial trench at Mapledurham Playing Fields

© Oxford Archaeology

A Roman jar being excavated at Mapledurham Playing Fields

© Oxford Archaeology



Making the Results of Archaeological Investigations Accessible



Our recent newsletters have shown the number and range of archaeological investigations taking place each year in East Berkshire. However, we report on only a fraction of the number of archaeological fieldwork projects that are undertaken. Many will be exploratory investigations, trying to identify the presence of buried remains, and not always succeeding! But this information has archaeological value too. It is often as useful to know where people did not settle and farm as to know where they did! It is therefore always very important that the results of all archaeological projects, whether conducted by professionals, amateurs, or local groups and societies, are written up and

published in some form so that future generations have access to the archaeological data. This is both a professional obligation as well as being enshrined in planning guidance which makes clear that the results of investigations should be made publicly accessible. Publication is achieved in many ways. The Berkshire Archaeological Journal provides an excellent vehicle for reports and projects with a strong Berkshire connection, while exceptionally important projects may merit publication in national archaeological journals, such as the Antiquaries Journal. Archaeological practices also frequently publish monographs, journals and papers in house.

In the majority of cases, the results of lesser projects will be set out in 'grey literature' reports, so called because they are not formal publications. They are now easily accessible on line via archaeological practices' websites, the OASIS database (<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/>) and, of course, through the Historic Environment Record, which is also available to the public. Berkshire Archaeology can always assist you if you want to know the results of an archaeological project near you in east Berkshire.

www.readingtownhall.co.uk/explore-reading-history/berkshire-archaeology

Archaeological publications in Berkshire © Berkshire Archaeology



Medieval Tile Kilns in Silver Street, Reading



Medieval tile kiln under excavation at No. 40 Silver Street © *Thames Valley Archaeological Services*
A complete, but broken, medieval pot from one of the kilns © *Thames Valley Archaeological Services*

The grandly named Silver Street lies south of London Street, south of Reading town centre. Both streets were part of the original street plan of medieval Reading, acting as the main route south from Reading Abbey and the town towards Winchester, Southampton and the south coast. No. 40 Silver Street lies on the very fringes of the presumed extent of medieval settlement along the Silver Street frontage and medieval deposits had previously been recorded to the north. The property was occupied by a utilitarian late 20th-century warehouse when plans were

proposed in 2017 to demolish the building and construct student accommodation on the site. This led to a programme of archaeological investigation in 2018 and 2019, undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services, that revealed that in the medieval period the site had served an industrial function and not a residential one. The remains of two tile kilns and associated features were revealed dating to the medieval period (1200 – 1500 AD). Cartographic evidence had given clues that this might be the case, with mapping of 1552 notating 'Tylers Cross' to the





north-west and 'Tylecroft' within the area of No. 40 Silver Street. Only the below ground remains of these tile kilns survived, the superstructures not having survived the subsequent development of the site. They were large rectangular brick and tile structures, with tiled floors. Tiled arches acted as flues for external

fire pits. The kilns would have been able to fire floor and roof tiles on an industrial scale. The area around Reading has few stone building resources and so tile and brick was important for more utilitarian buildings. However, there were indications that the kilns were firing more sophisticated material as some decorated floor tiles were

recovered from the excavation. Other features were recorded on the site, such as rubbish pits and a small domestic oven, indicating that the tilers may have been living nearby. There were therefore other domestic objects recovered from the site, including a complete, but broken, pot and food waste, including animal bone and oyster shells. Thames Valley Archaeological Services are currently studying the results of the excavation and using archaeomagnetic dating, which will hopefully provide a date for the last firing of each kiln, to help date these important medieval features.

Archaeomagnetic dating in progress on one of the tile kilns
© Thames Valley Archaeological Services

A fragment of decorated medieval floor tile
© Thames Valley Archaeological Services





Easthampstead Conservation Area in Bracknell

Bracknell is probably one of the most successful of the post-WWII New Towns, built to alleviate London's housing crisis. Only a small village in the early 19th-century, it grew with the arrival of the railway in the mid-19th-century linking London with Reading. Perhaps Oscar Wilde passed through the town by train and it inspired the name of the formidable Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*?

Bracknell New Town was conceived in the late 1940s and the first occupants of the neighbourhood of Priestwood moved in on Christmas Eve 1951. The town has grown ever since!



There is increasing interest in Britain's New Towns as they now reach an age to have history, their own heritage and a significant place in the development of town planning and urban architecture. Bracknell is no different.

The town already recognises its modernist heritage with the establishment of the Easthampstead Conservation Area, which largely incorporates the 1950s streets and housing of the New Town. Crescents, cul-de-sacs and rows of housing are arranged off Rectory Lane, intertwined with open green space, trees and pathways.

The hexagonal, 17-storey Point Royal, constructed between 1961 and 1964, forms the focal point of the Conservation Area and is Grade II listed. It is an iconic Bracknell building. The townhouses of The Crescent, The Green and the Shopping

Centre are also important elements of the Conservation Area, reflecting a modernist 1950s townscape. The Conservation Area status enables today's planners to take account of the value of this Bracknell neighbourhood for its largely intact modernist architecture, urban planning and its rightful place in the new town movement of the mid-20th-century.



Point Royal, a Grade II listed building and an iconic Bracknell building © *Berkshire Archaeology*

The Crescent, an example of late 1950s new town architecture © *Berkshire Archaeology*



Recent Discoveries Reported to Berkshire's Finds Liaison Officer

This year we feature three unusual objects found in east Berkshire in the last 12 months and reported to Berkshire's Finds Liaison Officer through the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). The first is a very rare (for Britain) silver drachma of Alexander III, struck at a mint in western Asia Minor (modern Turkey) at the end of the 4th-century BC, perhaps 310 - 301 BC. What was such a coin doing in east Berkshire? We can only speculate but the coin is heavily worn, had been in circulation for a long time and may well have been a memento or keepsake with a long history. One side of the coin has the head of Heracles (Hercules), the great Greek hero, and the other shows Zeus holding an eagle and sceptre.

Of more recent date is a gold and diamond(?) finger ring dating to the 17th-century. The transparent and colourless gem is cut to create a low three-sided pyramid. This simple but beautiful object would have been a considerable loss to its owner.

Despite hundreds of thousands of metal objects being reported to the PAS, the date and purpose of some remain uncertain. This copper object is only two centimetres in length and its precise purpose is unknown, although most likely it served as some form of toggle or fastener related to dress. Their date has been speculated to be anywhere between the Late Iron Age and Victorian periods! None have so far been found in a dated context.



A silver drachma of the late 4th century BC.

Reproduced with the kind permission of the Portable Antiquities Scheme

A 17th-century gold and diamond(?) finger ring.

Reproduced with the kind permission of the Portable Antiquities Scheme

A copper toggle or fastener of unknown date.

Reproduced with the kind permission of the Portable Antiquities Scheme



Montem Mound – Slough’s Most Important Archaeological Monument



Montem Mound next to the recently refurbished Slough Ice Arena © Berkshire Archaeology
New noticeboard providing information on the Mound to visitors to the Ice Arena © Berkshire Archaeology

In 2018 the revitalised Ice Arena just off the Bath Road in Slough was re-opened to the public. With a striking and appealing new façade, the facility is a much-used and well-loved facility in Slough. The building also sits next to one of Slough’s most important archaeological monuments – the Montem Mound. We have previously reported that recent key-hole investigation has demonstrated that the artificial, man-made mound, is in fact of Early Saxon date and was probably constructed in the 5th or 6th century AD, most likely as a burial mound for a person of wealth and influence. It was neither a medieval castle motte nor a Bronze Age burial mound. The refurbishment of the Ice Arena provided the opportunity to improve and enhance the Mound and its immediate environment. The footpath up to the summit



of the Mound has been improved and landscaping to the west of the Mound in front of the Ice Arena now provides a serene setting for the monument. The opportunity has also been taken to install a noticeboard close to the Ice Arena so that users can learn about the Mound and its origins.

The landscaping works did involve some groundworks, which were monitored by an archaeologist. However, the work was insufficiently deep to reveal any archaeological remains or finds associated that might have been associated with the construction or use of the Mound.



A Late Iron Age Farm is Revealed Along the Arborfield Cross Relief Road

The pretty village of Arborfield Cross lies at the meeting of six roads, albeit Cole Lane is little more than a trackway nowadays. The Arborfield Cross Relief Road is being constructed to the south-west of the village in order to relief the traffic through the village and to improve access to Arborfield Garrison. It was close to Swallowfield Road and Greensward Lane that evidence recently came to light for Arborfield Cross' prehistoric antecedents. Excavations here by Wessex Archaeology for Balfour Beatty on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council found the remains of a Late Iron Age (1st century BC) farm in early 2019. A large, deep ditch defined a near-square enclosure in the north-west corner of which were the remains of a round house. Originally built of wood, thatch and wattle and daub, all that survived were the foundations of the building cut into the subsoil. The round house would have been around 20m in diameter, providing considerable internal living space, probably for a single, large, extended Iron Age family. Finds recovered from the round house and adjacent ditches included broken pottery vessels, animal bone, fragments of clay loom weights, broken quern stones for grinding corn and other foodstuffs, and metalworking slag. Items of wood, leather and textile have not survived but the picture is emerging of a large, mostly self-sufficient, family of farmers living on the fringes of the Loddon Valley. Interestingly, when the nearby fine, Edwardian, country house of



Arborfield Court was built, two cremation burials were found in pottery urns. Perhaps these represent the remains of the farmer's ancestors, looking down protectively on their farm from the higher ground to the south-east?

Archaeologists mark the extent of a Late Iron Age round house at Arborfield Cross
© Wessex Archaeology

Iron Age and Roman pottery, including the Samian vessel shown on the front cover, in the process of excavation
© Wessex Archaeology



One of Berkshire's Earliest Houses is Reconstructed at Butser Ancient Farm



6,000 years ago. Remarkably this is just one of several to have been found in this part of Berkshire, with the remains of five similar buildings also being found at Kingsmead Quarry, Horton, a decade or so earlier.

Inevitably all that survives of these early structures are the holes and trenches dug to hold the timbers that formed the above ground frame of the building. There will always therefore be some conjecture as to how these buildings were constructed and what they actually looked like when completed.

In last year's newsletter we reported on the discovery of the remains of one of England's earliest houses at Datchet Quarry, near Windsor. Dating from the Early Neolithic period, this building was probably constructed between 4,000 and 3,500 BC, nearly

Experimental archaeology can help archaeologists with their interpretations. We are very pleased therefore that Butser Ancient Farm in Hampshire (www.butserancientfarm.co.uk)

has been reconstructing a Neolithic house, based on the archaeological evidence of one of the buildings at Kingsmead Quarry. Using a Neolithic 'toolkit' made up of flint, antler and wooden tools, the Farm has set about reconstructing the building and, in the process, helping archaeologists to understand the practical issues that must have faced our Neolithic ancestors. Indeed, some of the archaeologists from Wessex Archaeology who discovered and excavated the Kingsmead House have been involved in the reconstruction work at Butser so that they can consider, debate and disagree about what the building originally looked like, having actually tried to build one!



The foundations of an Early Neolithic House at Kingsmead Quarry, Horton, that formed the basis of Butser's reconstruction
© Wessex Archaeology

The Early Neolithic house at Butser under construction
© Butser Ancient Farm