



UNCOVERING OUR PAST TOGETHER



NEWSLETTER 141

Summer/Autumn 2017

GLOSARCH FIELDWORK

Pittville Park by James Hodsdon

In preparation for helping Cheltenham Borough Council draw up proposals for improving the surroundings of the Pump Room, the Friends of Pittville (FoP), a local amenity group, wanted to establish what if anything remained of the short flight of steps which once terminated the broad walk which until the 1890s ran up towards the Pump Room from the Upper Lake. The steps are visible on maps and postcards up to about 1900. The two plinths which bookended the steps are still there but now appear rather insignificant because the ground level has been built up over the years.

The solution was to do some practical archaeology, and at 9 a.m. on 20 April several FoP members took a break from normal Thursday park duties. Under the supervision of Gloucestershire Archaeology experts Les Comtesse, Terry Moore-Scott and Nigel Spry, and with CBC in attendance, three test pits were opened, each roughly 1.5m sq, one each next to the east and west plinths, and one half way between.

Because of the dry weather, the soil under the turf proved hard going, and we were over two hours in before any intelligible features came to light (not counting bottle caps, old lighters, confetti, etc). It was pretty clear that the stone steps themselves had gone – very probably between 1891, when we know the broad walk was turfed over, and 1900 when the bandstand was placed centrally between the plinths (a short-lived Bad Idea, corrected when the bandstand was shifted to its present location a year later).

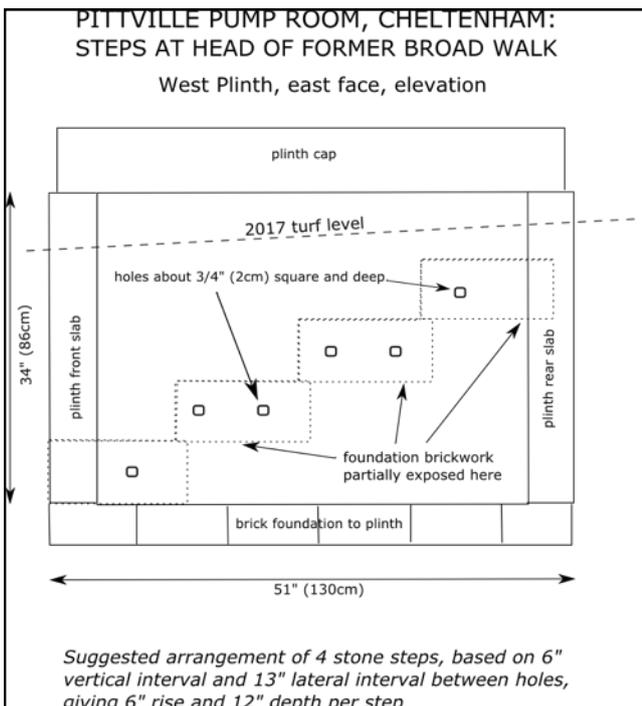


photo: Terry Moore-Scott

NB.
The Winter Lecture Programme is at the back of this Newsletter

However, we did find, beside each of the plinths, the remains of some stepped foundations in Victorian brick which clearly had once supported the forest stone steps themselves. Digging further, we established the full depth of the plinths, which themselves sit on undisturbed brick foundations. Then, when cleaning off the side of the plinth, we had a Time Team moment – an interesting find just when it was nearly time to think of packing up. The discovery was a series of small regular holes at four levels, which almost certainly would have corresponded to lugs on the end sections of the (missing) steps. The spacing was such as to indicate four steps, each with a rise of 6” and a tread of 12”, together fitting neatly into the side of the plinth.

The middle pit revealed two lengths of mortar-bonded brick-and-rubble footings, running north-south and clearly unrelated to the east-west step foundations. From the materials used, these were not modern and can be safely interpreted as connected with the first site of the bandstand.

By this point, we reckoned the pits had given up all their secrets, and by 1.00 pm the excavations had been recorded, back-filled and re-turfed. The unexpected highlight of the morning was the arrival of the Mayor with the top tier of her birthday cake (previously featured in the Echo), which she generously shared with us and which rather eclipsed our meagre haul of small finds: half a rusty horse-shoe and small change to the value of 7p

GLOUCESTER HISTORY FESTIVAL

Remember Glosarch members can get 25% discount by using the code GA when they book. This can be done online by adding the code into the concession box or on the phone or in person at the Tourist Information Centre.

Birdwood by Les Comtesse

Investigating a Gloucestershire Roman Road.

Local interest was found in the village of Birdwood, near Churcham, 5 miles to the west of Gloucester, in the possibility of retrieving evidence of a Roman highway which roughly follows the course of the modern A40 at this point. Margary (1) states that the present road follows the westward route of the Roman road through Churcham to near Birdwood. Here the Roman road to the settlement of Ariconium at Weston under Penyard (Margery's road no 611) diverges to the north whilst a road (Margary no. 61) to Mitcheldean keeps straight on, marked by hedgerows and lanes which adhere closely to the alignment, and now form part of the Gloucestershire Way Bridleway, where some metallisation occasionally appears to be evident. This section of Roman road by way of Little London and Mitcheldean eventually meets the Dean Road running north-south between Ariconium and the coast.

In the hope of unearthing the road or agger's surface and investigating its fabric and extent a small team of Glosarch. diggers was formed. Prior to this, permissions had to be obtained from Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and local farmers. In May 2017, following trial test probing two small trenches were dug across the bridleway, carefully avoiding excavating the central path section which it had been agreed with GCC should be kept open for walkers and horse traffic at all times. In one trench a well preserved surface of small angular limestones was quickly found. In the second trench the northern edge appeared similar but to the south the stones were more diffuse but did include many larger flatter segments. A notable feature found on the northern sides of both trenches was an abrupt linear surface truncation beyond which only red marl earth was present.



Top Surface of trench 1, looking eastward. photo - N Spry

Sondages were dug in the first trench and revealed layers of large, often flat stones above layers of smaller angular stones placed above a base layer of rounded (river washed?) pebbles. Below that was found natural red marl of the same type as that seen in neighbouring fields. Pre-medieval finds were almost non-existent but a single piece of probably late iron age pottery was discovered. Metal detection similarly did not produce anything significant.

Since only the northern road edge had been discovered interest shifted to the field adjacent to the southern boundary of the bridleway. With the permission of the landowner a high resolution resistivity survey was undertaken in the field, close to the boundary fence. This very clearly showed the presence and extent of the remaining road's surface. The overall road width appears to be in the region of 7m-10m, evidently quite an important thoroughfare. Spurred on by this result, plans are now advanced for a further excavation of the southern road boundary and possible drainage ditch.

¹ Margary I. D., *Roman Roads In Britain*, vol. 2 (1957), 59-61

Since the last AGM, Neil Armitage and David Jones have been co-opted onto the Executive Committee, which now comprises:

President: John Rhodes FMA	Members: Neil Armitage
Chairman: Russell Weston	Marta Cock
Secretary: Mike Milward	Les Comtesse
Treasurer: Angela Newcombe	David Hughes
Fieldwork: Tony Roberts	David Jones
Glevensis Editor: Diane Charlesworth	Linda Mills
Meetings Secretary: Jeannette Kirkpatrick	Terry Moore-Scott

SUMMER OUTINGS

Tewkesbury Battlefield Society provided a really fascinating tour of the parts of Tewkesbury over which the battle raged in 1471. Some of the site has been covered over with housing developments, but other parts are open space, and with the right guide, and reference to documentary accounts, the course of the conflict can be well recreated. On a fine evening, twelve members enjoyed the tour. Much less fine weather threatened for the town tour of Tetbury; at the end of a stormy day only three made the trip. Others missed a treat as the local society conducted a really informative walk around this attractive and historic town, starting just as the rain stopped and the sun came out. Up and down the steep streets and steps, we were shown sites and buildings with evocations from the medieval to WWII, and the Georgian Gothic church is a gem. The top of Cleeve Hill can be an unforgiving place in adverse weather, but we were blessed with a fine and warm evening for the walk round the archaeological sites there with Tim Copeland. We were shown a mound which may have been either a round barrow or the remains of a Victorian racecourse grandstand and the three Scheduled Ancient Monuments on Cleeve Common - the hillfort (or is it ?), The Ring (a puzzling circular feature) and the Cross-Ridge Dyke. Discussion of these sites came round to the possibility of Glosarch being invited to try some geophysics there - watch this space !



Gathered round the Battle of Tewkesbury Monument

Photo: Angela Newcombe



Glosarch at 1000 ft on Cleeve Hill

Photo: David Jones

Duroopolis and Badbury Rings

Bournemouth University's Durotriges Big Dig Open Day provided us with a guided tour of current excavations adjacent to the site of Iron Age Duroopolis, featuring numerous large pits dug into the solid chalk (below left) which contained a curious mix of human and animal remains, including some instances of the bones of different species being laid together to form a composite animal. There was also an impressively deep Bronze Age ditch. After a lunch stop in Wimborne Minster, where the Minster church was unfortunately closed, we visited the hillfort at Badbury Rings (below right) where we learned about its very complex history from the National Trust's Martin Papworth. The hill's relationship to a network of Roman roads intersecting at its foot was explained with reference to the Dorset coast, visible in the distance and the Roman invasion period fort near Wimborne. A late addition to the ramparts may indicate post-Roman re-use of the site.



Photos by David Jones (left) and Angela Newcombe (right)



COMMITTEE FOR ARCHAEOLOGY IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The Committee for Archaeology in Gloucestershire's annual conference is on Saturday 21st October 2017 in the Guildhall, Gloucester from 10am to 5pm.

The theme of the conference is "**The Historic Landscape of Gloucestershire: Prehistoric to Industrial**

The programme is:-

Dr Keith Ray "Offa's Dyke in Gloucestershire"

Dr Tom Moore of University of Durham "Becoming the Dobunni: the Middle and Late Iron Age in Gloucestershire"

Prof Tim Darvill of University of Bournemouth "Abbey Home Farm, Cirencester - one land: many landscapes"

Neil Holbrook of Cotswold Archaeology "The countryside of Roman Gloucestershire"

Prof Jennifer Tann "Walking into the picture: the woollen industry through contemporary artists' eyes"

Jon Hoyle of Gloucestershire County Council "Hidden Landscapes in the Forest of Dean"

Prof Christopher Dyer of University of Leicester "New light on the medieval Gloucestershire landscape; using field work and documents"

Steve Crowther and Amanda Adams of Historic England "From bomb dump to rubbish dump? The legacy of twentieth century military infrastructure in and around Gloucestershire"

Tickets cost £15 including tea/coffee and booking is essential.

A booking form can be found on the BGAS website www.bgas.org.uk or send a cheque made out to CAG to the CAG Secretary, John Loosley, Stonehatch, Oakridge Lynch, Stroud GL67NR. For further information email johnloosley40@gmail.com

Glosarch Autumn/Winter programme 2017/18

All meetings are on Mondays beginning at 7.30pm

Cheltenham venue:

St Andrews Church, Montpellier St, Cheltenham GL50 1SP

Parking on street, free after 6pm

Please note there is a change of venue for the Gloucester meetings which will now take place at:

St John the Evangelist, Churchdown & Innsworth

St Johns Ave, Churchdown, GL3 2DB

<https://goo.gl/maps/4FbA6jRiz5y>

Parking is available in the church grounds.

Date	Speaker	Subject	Venue
25 September	Vix Hughes Project Officer Oxford Archaeology	An opportunity to find out about the archaeology of Cross Rail, one of the largest archaeological programmes ever undertaken in this country.	Cheltenham
23 October	Andrew Armstrong Gloucester City Archaeologist	An update on the recent excavations carried out in Gloucester	Gloucester
20 November	Wessex Archaeology	<i>The Bernard Rawes Lecture.</i> Hucclecote Roman Villa 1930 - 2012	Cheltenham
11 December	Sarah Arrowsmith	Hereford's curious map : Sarah Arrowsmith will be sharing the results of her 10 year study of the Mappa Mundi	Gloucester
22 January	Members evening		Cheltenham
19 February	Martin Papworth, National Trust Archaeologist	Chedworth Roman Villa: Martin and his team have been excavating at the villa for the last 5 years.	Gloucester
19 March	Dan Sausins Cotswold Archaeology	Dan will be talking about the Gloscat Redevelopment Project at the media studies site	Cheltenham
9 April	AGM Tim Darvill	<i>The Eddie Price Lecture.</i> A tomb with a view: recent work on Cotswold long barrows	Gloucester