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Newsletter 157

Spring 2026

The spring is upon us once again and GlosArch members have already been busy with fieldwork and the first visits of the year. There is still a great deal to look forward to, with one lecture to go, several interesting visits planned and lots more fieldwork coming up in the next few months. So however you want to get involved, there is probably something for you.

Membership subscriptions

It's that time of year again. Membership renewals fell due on 1st March. So far well over 100 members have paid but there are still a good number who haven't. If you are planning to renew your membership, please pay as soon as possible. Once you have paid I will send out your copy of *Glevensis*, which is due from the printers any day. The subscription has remained unchanged at £20 for Full (Ordinary) members and £10 for students and associate members. You can pay by bank transfer to: Gloucestershire Archaeology
Sort Code: 089299, A/c No: 67285787

Or by cheque to: Sally Nicholas, Hon Treasurer, 57 Church St., Tetbury, GL8 8JG.

If you are paying by bank transfer, why not set up a regular payment to renew each year on 1st March.

Glevensis

Volume 58 of *Glevensis* is due back from the printers any day now. It is a bumper edition running to over 80 pages, so there will be loads to read. Top billing goes to Tony Roberts' report on the fieldwork at the Iron Age and Roman site at Slimbridge that was the subject of the March lecture and which appeared on Digging for Britain this February. Other articles are on the defences of Roman Kingsholm, two excavations in Gloucester by Cotswold Archaeology and a report on the GlosArch excavation at Brookthorpe.

As ever, the cost of postage is substantial, so if you are willing to deliver a few copies to other members who live in your area, that would be amazing. Please contact me at phil.cox@doctors.org.uk if you can help.

GlosArch 59th Annual General Meeting

The 59th Annual General Meeting of GlosArch will take place on **Monday 27th April 2026 at 7.00pm** at St Andrew's URC church hall, Montpellier St., Cheltenham, GL50 1SP. You

can attend in person or online via Zoom. The papers for the meeting will be circulated to members in the next couple of weeks and the Zoom link will be sent a few days before the meeting.

The AGM will be followed at around 7.30pm by the April lecture: *The tale of two Roman cavalry swords, The evaluation at Willersey, January 2025*, by Peter Busby of Cotswold Archaeology.

2026 Visits Programme

Thursday 5th February

M5 J10 improvement works - Site visit

This year the “Summer” visits programme started early, with a guided walk in February,



led by staff of Archeological Research Services, of the archaeological investigations at the site of the new, southbound road connection to the M5 from the A4019 at Junction 10 outside Cheltenham. The ARS team walked us around the muddy site to show us the main features they have found so far, including Roman burials, a corn drier and Iron Age ditches. Afterwards we were shown some of their key finds, including a copper bracelet, brooches and coins. Thank you to

Alice Short and the team from ARS for showing us around.

Saturday 11th April

Withington Romano-British Villa

On a bright, if blustery, April morning Simon Greenslade and his team from The Halewell Archaeology Project took 26 GlosArch members on a tour of the excavations they are undertaking in a quiet valley outside Withington, Gloucestershire. They are excavating a

large Roman villa, which turns out to be the one described by Samuel Lysons in 1811. The Orpheus mosaic he discovered is now in the British Museum. In 2006, Time Team also excavated a villa in a field adjacent to the current dig and decided it was Lysons' villa. However, evidence from the the current excavation indicates that this one is the villa excavated in 1811. It is a sizeable residence with some surviving mosaics, a bath house and several phases of building. Work is still on-going.



Forthcoming Events -----

Saturday 20th June

Summer Coach Trip to Avebury and Marlborough

This all-day trip will include a two hour guided walk/talk over undulating, but relatively easy, countryside between the following ancient monuments, all part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, *but there will be no compulsion to do everything, only as much as you feel able to do.*

Avebury Henge

A Neolithic henge monument in Wiltshire containing three stone circles, in the centre of



which, the village of Avebury has grown. It is one of the best-known prehistoric sites in Europe containing the largest megalithic stone circle in the world.

Avebury Henge dates from around 4,600 years ago. The banks and ditches are almost a mile in circumference, and the ditch must have been originally around nine metres deep. The banks were built up from chalk, dug from the ditch using stone and bone tools, and all of these earthworks would have been bright white when new, but for what purpose...?

The outer stone circle is the largest prehistoric circle of standing stones in the world and there are the remains of two other smaller stone circles within it, which may be older. The stones are enormous, the largest weighing at least 100 tonnes, making it the largest and heaviest in Britain. They are locally sourced hard grey sandstone known as sarsen.

Avebury is within the same UNESCO World Heritage Site as Stonehenge, which is around 26 miles due south, and has, similarly attracted pilgrims for thousands of years and is still a place of religious importance to contemporary pagans.

The Avenue

The 'Avenue', near Avebury was originally of around 100 pairs of prehistoric standing stones, raised to form a winding 1-1/2 mile ritual link between the pre-existing monuments of Avebury and The Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary

The Sanctuary, begun in about 2500 BC, was originally a complex circular arrangement of timber posts and standing stones. These components are now indicated by concrete blocks, painted blue for stones and posts, painted red for wood. The stone circles were first recorded by the antiquary John Aubrey, who first visited in 1649 and noted that local people called it 'The Sanctuary'. In 1723 another antiquary, William Stukeley, also drew the stone circles, but shortly afterwards the monument was destroyed so that the land could be used for agriculture. When archaeologist, Maud Cunnington rediscovered and excavated the Sanctuary in 1930 with her team, she found two concentric rings of stone holes, and unexpectedly, five rings of wooden postholes.

Silbury Hill



Silbury Hill, located near Avebury, is the largest prehistoric artificial mound in Europe, comparable in size to some Egyptian pyramids. Made primarily of chalk it stands about 30 meters high and 160 meters wide. While its purpose remains unknown, it is thought to have been built during the late Neolithic period, around 2400 BC.

West Kennet Long Barrow

One of the largest, most impressive and most accessible Neolithic chambered tombs in

Britain. Built in around 3650 BC, it was used for a short time as a burial chamber, nearly 50 people being buried here, before the chambers were blocked and it fell into disuse.

Swallowhead Springs

The walk ends here where the coach will be waiting to take us to -

Marlborough

We stop in the pleasant old market town of Marlborough a civil parish in Wiltshire on the Old Bath Road, the A4, or the Great West Road from *Londinium* to *Aquae Sulis*. The town is on the River Kennet and the earliest sign of human habitation there is the Marlborough Mound, a manmade, 62-foot-high (19 m) prehistoric tumulus in the grounds of Marlborough College. Recent radiocarbon dating has found it to date from about 2400 BC, similar in age and perhaps a companion mound to the larger Silbury Hill, 5 miles to the west. Unfortunately while putting this trip together a further archaeological survey is being scheduled for the Mound and so there will be no further public admittance allowed

this season. There is still the 17th century Merchant's House to visit should you wish, or there are some great cafes for tea or a late lunch.

Fare including coach, guides, donations etc £20 each approx.

If you wish to come on the trip, please email events@glosarch.org.uk to book a place.

Saturday 5th September 14:00 – 16:00

Corinium Revisited

A two hour walk and talk with Neil Holbrook, Chief Executive of Cotswold Archaeology, about the Roman town of *Corinium*, the street grid plan of which, still lies beneath the modern streets.

We tour the four main town gates by retracing from the original central crossroads, the *umbilicus urbis*, or town navel where the *cardo maximus* crosses the *decumanus*



Image - Historic England



Image - Rob Noble

maximus, the *forum*, *basilica*, *macellum*, the early fort, the *vicus*, the amphitheatre, the theatre, the baths, mosaicist workshops and defensive town walls.

Neil has researched, excavated and written a great deal on Roman *Corinium*, Roman villas and Gloucestershire's ancient history and is a national authority on the subject as well as being a member of GlosArch.

Please contact events@glosarch.org.uk to book a place.

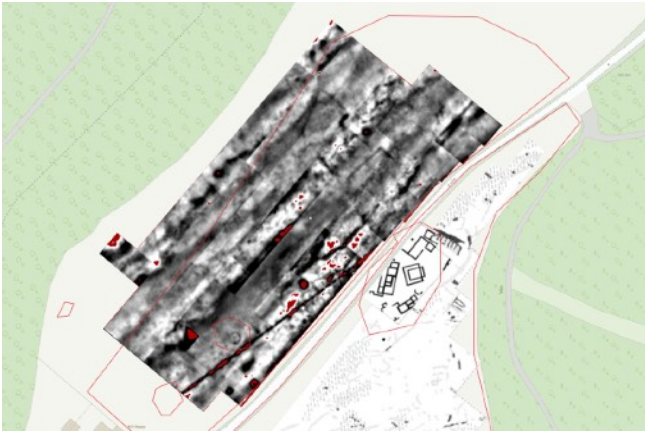
Museum of Gloucester (Sept TBA)

A tour for GlosArch members of the museum to include the discovery centre and some rarely seen ancient artefacts.

2026 Fieldwork

Uley

Fieldwork also got off to an early start this year. One 30 volunteers spent 5 days in late March (after the rains abated) continuing the surveys in the field at Uley containing the Hetty Pegpler's tump Neolithic long barrow. This area is rich in archaeology. In addition to the tump, the field is known to contain several Bronze Age round barrows, whilst a little to



the south is the large Iron Age hillfort and over the road is the site of the Uley Romano-Celtic temple.

Over the five days we covered another forty 20x20m grids of resistivity and 48 grids of magnetometry, a total of 3.5 hectares. The results are looking very interesting with several a new ditches appearing, some possibly indicating a late Iron Age settlement, as well as one known and a possible new Bronze Age barrow. Work has now been paused for

skylark nesting season and we aim to return later in the year once the hay in the field has been cut.

Forthcoming Activities

A busy programme of excavation is planned for the coming months.

Icomb, Stow-on-the -Wold, 12-14 April

We start the digging season with an exploratory investigation at Icomb, near Stow-on-the-Wold. Lidar shows earthworks in a mostly wooded hilltop area. These have not previously been investigated and suggestions range from a Roman signal station to a Civil War sconce. Uptake for this excavation has been excellent and all spaces for the three days have been filled.

Honeycombe, Miserden, 5-8 June

In June we will be returning to hopefully complete the excavation of the lost building at Honeycombe near Miserden. Work so far has revealed a three-roomed building. Two rooms have a well-laid flagstone floor, with an oven, stone shelves and a staircase. The third room has a rougher floor and may have been a workshop. The earliest small finds date to the 17th century. This year we will be



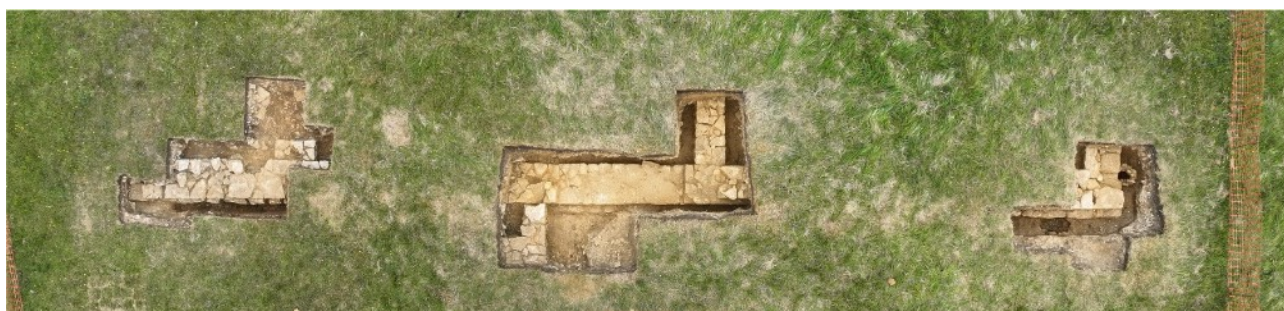
completing the excavation of the western end of the building.

Places are still available for this dig to either excavate or process finds. To take part, email fieldwork@glosarch.org.uk . No previous experience is required.

Cleeve Common, The Racecourse Grandstand, 2-7 August

The third excavation of the year will see us return to the grandstand of Cheltenham's first racecourse. Having previously explored the northwest, southwest and part of the southeast walls, this year we will be focussing on the northeast wall and eastern corner and interior of the building.

Over the course of a week we hope to complete the investigation of the grandstand and



produce enough evidence to allow us to produce a digital model of the building which will be made available to the public, using funds from a grant from the Jockey Club. There is plenty to do, so we will need plenty of volunteers. If you would like to take part, either digging or processing finds, please email: fieldwork@glosarch.org.uk . No previous experience is required.

2025-26 Lecture series

Once again we have been treated to a wide range of topics by an array of interesting speakers. We have averaged an audience of around 55 between St Andrew's URC church hall and Zoom, with a number of members also taking advantage of the recorded talks. We started in September with a round-up of recent excavations in the City of Gloucester by Andrew Armstrong the city archaeologist and in October, followed this with an examination of the defences of Roman Kingsholm and the role of Kingsholm fort in the invasion of Wales by myself and Tim Copeland. November's talk was the annual look at the previous year's GlosArch fieldwork, presented by Neil Cathie and presentation of plans for 2026.

In the run-up to Christmas, Phil Brant-Simmons of Corinium museum told us about an extensive Anglo-Saxon burial ground at Lechlade, excavated in the 1980s by Oxford Archaeology. This graveyard includes pagan and Christian burials and produced some fabulous grave goods indicating high-status individuals.

2026 started with Jeannette Kirkpatrick's presentation on the Victorians and the discovery and presentation of Chedworth Roman villa. It was interesting to hear how the current site came into being. Next up, Gail Boyle, CBA Chair of Trustees, and former curator of archaeology at Bristol Museums, took us on a whistle stop tour of prehistoric South

Gloucestershire, whilst in April Tony Roberts gave us the latest update on the work he is leading at the Iron Age and Roman site at Slimbridge. We will finish on 27th April with Peter Busby of Cotswold Archaeology whose topic is: *The tale of two Roman cavalry swords, The evaluation at Willersey, January 2025*. Both Slimbridge and the swords featured in the 2026 series of *Digging for Britain*.

Other Activities

Saturday 18th July - Saturday 1st August

Gloucester Festival of Archaeology

After last year's successful Festival of Archaeology, this year will see even more activities and events. In line with the national theme, there will be events looking at the overlap between archaeology and nature. GlosArch will have a stall, most likely at The Folk of Gloucester museum, on Festival Day, 18th July. We hope also to run a couple of other activities during the two week festival.

Festival of Archaeology 2026 National Launch Day,

Saturday 18th July at Westonbirt Arboretum

GlosArch is very honoured to have been invited to have a stall at the National launch of the Festival of Archaeology at Westonbirt Arboretum. This is also on Saturday 18th July. This is a great opportunity for GlosArch to get noticed along with the Gloucester festival day. We will get more details soon.

Sunday 16th August 2026

Birdlip Roman Festival - The Dobunni

After a very successful first year in 2025, Birdlip Roman Festival promises another full day of historical displays, archaeological talks, discovery and family fun. See Roman legionary life with the excellent Ermine Street Guard, with this year's special feature being Gloucestershire's own Dobunni tribe. GlosArch will have a promotional stand there.

We will need helpers to staff our stalls at all of these events. It is a great way to meet other members and to engage with the public. If you can man a stall, all day, or just for an hour please let me know. We are also always open to ideas for activities.

Email me at phil.cox@doctors.org.uk with offers of help or ideas.

Phil Cox

April 2026