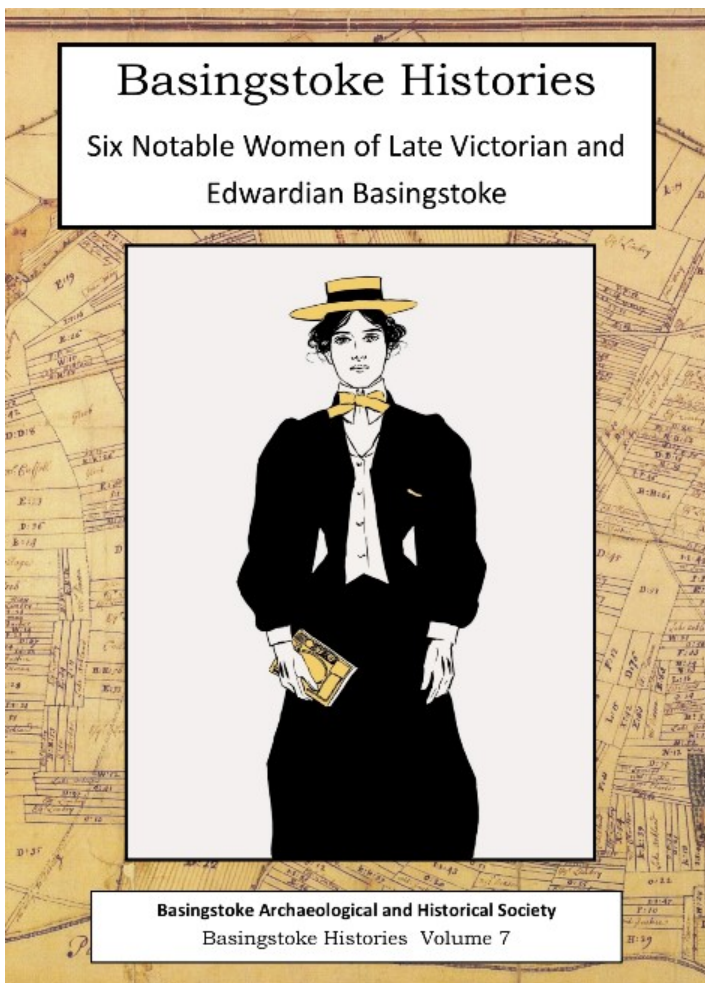


BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter Number 255

MAY 2026



CONTENTS

Stanchester 2026 excavations	page 3
BAHS Lecture programme 2026	page 5
Invitation to book launch of “Six Notable Women”	page 6
BAHS lecture reports	page 7
What’s On	page 10
Musings from Brittany by Ginny Pringle	page 12
Was King Arthur a comet? by Peter Stone	page 16
Basingstoke’s First Labour Mayor by Roger Ottewill	page 20
Book Shelf by Penny Ingham	page 27

Welcome to the May 2026 BAHS newsletter.

This summer we will once again be digging up at Stanchester, and the field work team have been hard at work planning and preparing the site. The dates of this year’s excavation are Saturday 20th June to Saturday 4th July. For those who would prefer to come along to the open day, Friday 3rd July is the date to save.

As always, Ginny Pringle has put together an excellent and varied lecture programme for the remainder of the year including, on Monday 11th May, Prof David Hinton of the University of Southampton who will be talking about “Rural settlement in medieval Hampshire and beyond: from the fifth century to the fifteenth”.

The book launch of our latest publication (see front cover) will be held on 1st June, and the official invitation is on Page 6. I have no doubt the indefatigable Pauline Hedges will be making a cake to celebrate the event – some of her previous confectionary creations can be found later in this newsletter.

Also featured in this edition: Ginny Pringle takes us on a tour of the prehistoric sites of Brittany; Roger Ottewill explores the life and work of George Pheby, Basingstoke’s First Labour Mayor, and Peter Stone muses on the origins of the legend of King Arthur.

I hope to see you at some or all of the aforementioned events. In the meantime, I wish you all a wonderful summer.

Penny Ingham

Stanchester 2026

This year, our excavations at the Stanchester Romano-British near Chilton Candover site will run for two weeks from Saturday 20th June until

Saturday 4th July.

We will be focusing our attention on a building that revealed an internal tiled arch last year, attempting to establish its full extent by doubling the size of the trench. If volunteer numbers permit, we may do some work elsewhere on the site.



If you have always wanted to take part in an excavation but have never quite got round to it, then this would be a great opportunity to do so. If you have some previous experience and would like to get involved, then we would be happy to welcome you on site. If you regularly come along to the excavation, then please make note of the dates.

The fieldwork site team strive to provide an inclusive working environment where you can learn new skills and get to know about an interesting site whilst enjoying some like-minded company. There is a wide spread of activities that we need help with, ranging from



digging and trowelling in the trenches, through planning, drawing and photography to finds processing. If you are not blessed with lots of holiday or spare time, then you can commit to as much time as you can spare. Please do get in touch with me if you would like to take part, and I will send you more details.

Stanchester Open Day – Friday 3rd July

If you cannot take part but would like to see this year's results, then we will be running an open day at the end of the dig. On Friday 3rd July we will run two site tours, one at 2:00 pm and one at 5:30 pm. If you would be interested in coming along, please let me know so that we can send you information on where to meet.

Mark Peryer - email: markperyer@gmail.com Tel: 07770 832397

Volunteers required for Excavation at Steventon Rectory

Deborah Charlton is directing an excavation at the Pump Field (Steventon Rectory, birth place of Jane Austen) and is looking for volunteers. Experienced specialists will be on site to provide training and advice for anyone who needs it. This is a 'free' dig and all are welcome. Breaking ground on 21st May for 6 weeks, all days, subject to rota availability.

If you would like to take part, please email Deborah Charlton at: archaeobriton@gmail.com

Subs – Standing Order Reminder

Please may we remind you that our subs increased last September and if you have not already done so, please update your standing order to the new amount before this September. This will help us avoid having to ask you to pay the difference.

As a reminder, the current subscription rates are:

Single membership - £15

Joint or family membership - £23

Paper newsletter supplement - £8

BAHS LECTURE PROGRAMME 2026

Monday 11th May: Rural settlement in medieval Hampshire and beyond: from the fifth century to the fifteenth

Prof David Hinton, University of Southampton

Drawing upon case studies, David will enlighten us about what happened to rural settlements, particularly in Hampshire but also beyond, over a 1000 year period from the fifth century through to the fifteenth.

Monday 1st June: AGM followed by book launch and talk on “Six Notable Women”

Roger Ottey and Jennie Butler, local historians and authors

Authors Roger Ottey and Jennie Butler, both of whom are stalwarts of the Hampshire Victoria County History programme, will describe what led them to write this new book, whilst offering an insight into why these particular six women from Basingstoke were so notable.

September 7th: The Winchester Cathedral Mortuary Chests Project

Dr Heidi Dawson-Hobbs, Senior Lecturer in Biological Anthropology, University of Winchester

September 2012 marked the start of the long running Winchester Cathedral mortuary chests project, when six chests, purported to contain the remains of kings and a queen were opened and the contents investigated for the first time since the end of the nineteenth century. As the project nears a close, this talk will discuss the analysis of the remains and present some of our findings.

October 5th: Winchester to Bolton: the progress of the Paulets

David Whiter, Historian

For nearly 300 years the Paulets were pillars of the aristocracy; rich, powerful and deeply involved in major events in the kingdom. But what were they like as individuals? And how were they shaped by their times?

November 2nd: Made with humility and skill”: The origins and development of the Verwood-type pottery industry

Dr Dan Carter, Archaeologist

December 7th: Children of Basingstoke Workhouse

Barbara Large, Historian and author

You are cordially invited to the launch of

**‘Six Notable Women
of Late Victorian and Edwardian Basingstoke’
by Roger Ottewill and Jennie Butler**

*(Volume 7 of the Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society’s
Basingstoke Histories series)*

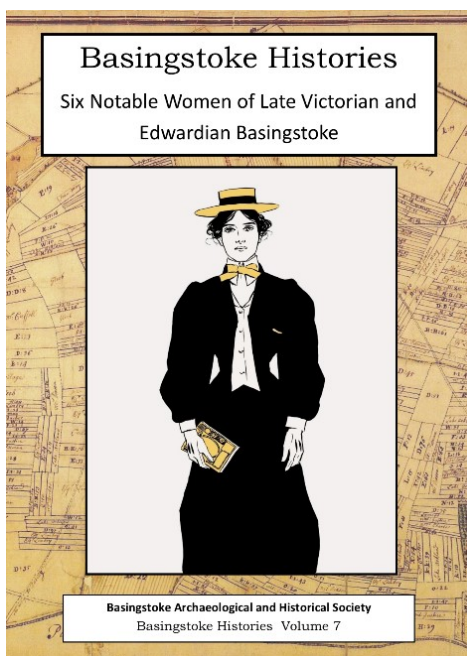
**Monday 1st June 7.30pm at Church Cottage, Basingstoke
(after the AGM)**

There is no admittance charge for guests

The six notable women celebrated in this book all played their part in the immense social and political changes of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Drawing on contemporary newspaper reports and records, this book paints a vivid picture of these pioneering Basingstoke women, and serves as a fitting tribute to their endeavours.

Priced at just £6, Six Notable Women can be purchased at the launch; from the BAHS website:

[Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society – Helping you discover Basingstoke's past](#)
or from the Willis Museum, Basingstoke.



BAHS LECTURE REPORTS (plus cakes, of course)



Our February lecture was given by Joseph Rogers on “Tithe Barns... and their imposters”. Joseph explained that only barns used to store the Church’s tithe taxes warrant the title of ‘tithe barns’. The rest were often merely estate barns. During the Medieval period, farmers across Europe were obliged to offer one tenth of their annual yield to the Church, supporting a network of monasteries, abbeys, churches and clergy. Storage for such offerings, known as tithes, required the construction of large, protective structures, large enough to hold produce from many surrounding farms.

After the Reformation much land passed from the Church to lay owners who inherited entitlement to receive tithes, along with the land. By the early 19th century, tithe payment in kind was felt to be outdated and the 1836 Tithe Commutation Act saw tithes being paid in monetary form.

To celebrate Joseph’s talk, Pauline Hedges created an edible tithe barn, crafted with custard cream walls and a wafer roof. Two (non- edible) ‘tithe’ sheep can be seen in the foreground.

Joseph’s book ‘Tithe Barns’ is published by Amberley, priced at £15.99.



Photo shows Professor Mike Fulford cutting Pauline Hedges' Calleva cake, complete with mini Wispa chocolate houses!

In March, we were delighted to welcome back Professor Mike Fulford, CBE, of the University of Reading, who gave a talk on: "Silchester: the Landscape Setting of the Iron Age Oppidum and the Roman City".

The talk was based on the definitive report on the Silchester Environs Project, which examined settlement pattern, economy and development, initially explored through analysis of the available aerial photography and LiDAR data over c. 1000 sq km.

Focusing on a 50 km square centred on Calleva, six locations with suspected later prehistoric enclosures were sampled by coring

and excavation, and accompanied by extensive programmes of radiocarbon dating and environmental, especially pollen, analysis.

Neolithic and Bronze Age activity was identified, but the first permanent settlements appeared to be of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date.

The period with the most numerous settlements is the Middle Iron Age (4th to 2nd century BC), which was characterised by hillforts and smaller ditched enclosures. Their abandonment was followed by woodland regeneration.

At the end of the 1st century BC, new settlements were founded, including the 38 hectare defended oppidum in a wooded and otherwise empty landscape. A territory with a radius of about 2 kilometres and devoid of individual farmsteads was established around the oppidum to provide land for cultivation and grazing, and it was retained with the founding of the Roman city. This territory corresponds approximately

with the combined present-day parishes of Mortimer West End and Silchester.

The charcoal assemblages show evidence for the management of the woodlands including for the preparation of charcoal from the Late Iron Age though the Roman, post-Roman and early medieval periods including the re-occupation of the hillfort at Pond Farm.

Mike's book, "Silchester: the landscape setting of the Iron Age oppidum and Roman City: From the Neolithic to the Middle Ages" by Oxbow Books, costs £55.

Our April meeting saw Ryan Reid, Community Archives Officer at Wessex Film and Sound Archive, give a presentation entitled "Access and Amplification: Basingstoke's Past on Film".

The event began with a screening of historical film of Basingstoke, ranging from the 1930s to the 1990s. The earliest black and white footage showed firemen and farm workers endeavouring to extinguish a hay rick!

Basingstoke's celebrations, for the Festival of Britain in 1951, including a fancy dress parade, were also caught on film as well as shots of the streets of Basingstoke in the 1960s and 70s before the redevelopment of the town. Many in the audience enjoyed identifying lost landmarks – a real trip down memory lane.



Ryan Reid cutting Pauline Hedges' Basingstoke movie reel cake, which included a black and white clapper board.

WHAT'S ON

WILLIS MUSEUM

BEES! Hampshire's Hive of History & Nature Exhibition

14 Mar 2026 - 28 Jun 2026, free admission, donations welcome.

FRIENDS OF THE WILLIS

Archaeology Gallery at the Willis Museum, Basingstoke, 7.30pm.

May 21st - **The History of Lasham Airfield** -David Wickens

June 18th - **The Woman who gave Birth to Rabbits** - Bob Clarke

Mary Toft was an English woman from Godalming, Surrey, who in 1726 became the subject of considerable controversy when she tricked doctors into believing that she had given birth to rabbits. The resultant public mockery created panic within the medical profession and ruined the careers of several prominent surgeons. Bob's latest book on this intriguing topic will be published in August.

TADLEY AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY

Baughurst and Heath End Village Hall, Heath End Road, Baughurst, 8pm.

Mon 11 May - **A History of the University of Reading** – Ian Burn

Mon 8 June - **'It Takes the Biscuit' – A History of Biscuit Making in Reading, Berks** – Nigel Crompton

Mon 13 July - **The Lady with the Lamp – The Florence Nightingale Story** – Paul Whittle

Mon 14 Sept -**Rover Scouts during WWII** – Brian O'Neill

Mon 12 Oct - **Shaw House: 400 years of History** – Sarah Somerville

Mon 9 November - **Pamber Priory – 900 years** – TADS Project Group

WINCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP)

Hampshire Records Office, Winchester, 7.30pm

Mon 11th May **Richard III – The king under the car park** - Mathew Morris

HAMPSHIRE FIELD CLUB

Wed 13th May - 7.30 pm **AGM plus President's Lecture: 'Clausentum: Gateway to Roman Britain'** by Dr Andy Russell. Book via TicketSource.
Hampshire Record Office, Winchester

Sat 19th September - **Celebrating Hampshire Historians**

United Church Winchester, Jewry St, Winchester, SO23 8RZ

Wed 30th September - 7.30 pm **the Annual OGS Crawford Lecture will be given by John Crook - His life and work in Winchester**
Hampshire Record Office, Winchester.

WHITCHURCH SILK MILL

Sat 9th May **Whitchurch Folk Festival** (music, dancing, singing, Morris Men and much more).

Sat 23rd May **Silk Production Tour** 11-12pm. £25 per person.

Sat 6 June - **Regency Picnic** £65 per person. 3pm-7pm.

Thurs 11 June - **Dressing the First President** by Phillip De Paola - Online talk. Philip, New York-based tailor and Associate Collections Specialist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, unveils his journey to recreate the original suit of George Washington. £15. 7pm-8pm.

JANE AUSTEN'S HOUSE, CHAWTON

1-4 May **Spring Fling: Sense & Sensibility Festival**

For a complete listing of their upcoming talks and events, check out their website: <https://janeaustens.house>

THE CHALKE VALLEY HISTORY FESTIVAL

22 - 28 June. More details: [Home - Chalke History Festival](#)

BASING HOUSE

Basing House is now open for the 2026 season. Forthcoming events include The Sealed Knot (dates tbc) and a Paranormal Investigation Evening on Sat 9th May.

STRATFIELD SAYE HOUSE AND GARDENS

The former home of the Duke of Wellington will be open from the 6th to 31st August 2026. On those dates, tours are available at 10:15am, 11:15am, 12:15pm, 1:15pm, 2:15pm and 3:15pm. Pre-booking is advised.

Musings from Brittany

by Ginny Pringle

Brittany, renowned for its stunning coastlines, chateaux and cuisine, also boasts a fascinating prehistoric landscape well worth visiting. The southern Morbihan area of Brittany has the greatest concentration of prehistoric megalithic sites in the world. Stone alignments, circles, menhirs (tall standing stones), passage graves, tumuli and dolmens are scattered across the landscape, hinting at a deeper story.

Megaliths emerged in Brittany and on the Iberian Peninsula during the fifth millennium BC before spreading north to Britain some one thousand years later. The Atlantic seaboard afforded opportunities for the movement of people in contrast to densely forested areas inland, as evidenced by the spread of monumentalism in the Neolithic period along the Atlantic coastal fringes of northwest Europe.

Debate centres on Late Mesolithic burials in Brittany as being the origin of passage graves. On the islands of Teviec and Hoedic, near the Quiberon peninsula, men, women and children were interred with a variety of grave goods in stone-lined cists, sometimes covered by further stones which had fires set on them, then animal jaw bones placed over and finally covered by small stone cairns. These were mostly multiple burials of up to six individuals and the best Mesolithic antecedents for megalithic burial practice anywhere in Europe.

Sea levels have risen dramatically over past millennia. Today, the Gulf of Morbihan is a sheltered bay, dotted with islets and popular with the sailing community. Seven thousand years ago it was a riverine environment, an attractive landscape rich with game, fowl and fish. Most of the megalithic monuments still visible today were constructed on the fringes of elevated ground and islets were hills rising above the surrounding plain.

The Neolithic passage grave on the island of Gavrinis is now only accessible by boat. Elsewhere, stone circles, such as Er Lannic, lie partially

submerged or only visible at low tide. Other sites remain hidden beneath the sea. Built between 4250 and 4000 BC, the tomb at Gavrinis is comparable in architecture with the monuments at Brú na Bóinne



The finely decorated passage at Gavrinis

(Ireland) c. 3200 BC and to a degree, Maes Howe (Orkney) c. 3000 BC. Petroglyphs within the tomb follow similar artistic styles to those at Brú na Bóinne as do symbols found in dolmens elsewhere within the region.

Of note is the re-use of stone. At Locmariaquer, another must-see site, there was once an open arrangement of 18 standing stones erected c. 4500



Le Grand Menhir Brise, Locmariaquer, in all its fallen glory

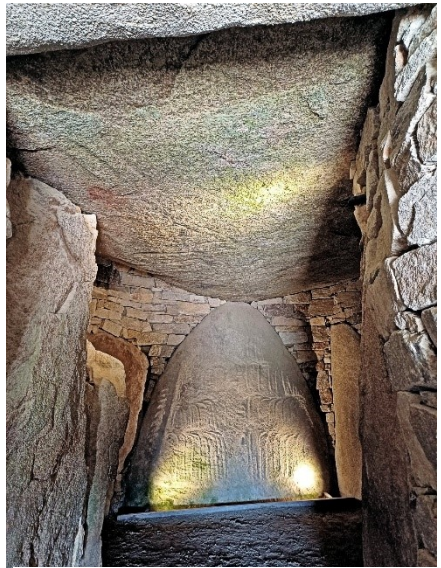
BC. These free standing and aligned giant menhirs, known as The Great Menhirs, measuring between 6 and 20 metres tall, marked out a sacred place. The row was destroyed, possibly by an earthquake, c. 4300-4200 BC and the tallest, the largest monolith

from the prehistoric west, known as Le Grand Menhir Brisé, now lies horizontally in four pieces.



Entrance of the Table de Marchands passage grave, Locmariaquer, with a partly reconstructed stone mound above the original dolmen

Individual burial chambers appeared, such as the Er Grah tumulus c. 4200 BC, followed by collective burials such as the Table des Marchands c. 3900 BC, both of which form part of the Locmariaquer complex. Excavations have revealed that the stone at the back of the Table des Marchands chamber is older than the dolmen itself. Erected at the same time as The Great Menhir alignment, it is decorated on both sides and remained in its original position when The Great Menhir row was destroyed and the dolmen built around it. The capstone is decorated with engravings including the lower part of an ox. Another part of the animal is to be found 4km away, on the capstone of the tomb at Gavrinis. The final part is



Interior of the Table de Marchands passage grave, Locmariaquer, with the re-used capstone and rear stone

thought to be the block covering the grave at the nearby Er Grah tumulus. These three parts may have originally formed a menhir measuring 14m high. Perhaps one of the earliest examples of recycling.



Stone alignments at Carnac

It is easy to pack visits to the main prehistoric sites into a one week stay centred on Carnac with spare time for walking and fine dining – oysters farmed locally, crepes and galettes all feature on local menus. Cuisine aside, the priorities are the stone alignments at Carnac, with a pre-booked tour (preferably in English) inside the alignments as well as an independent long hike along the well-maintained and signposted surrounding trails and megalithic monuments; a visit to the Museum of Prehistory in the centre of Carnac, (a visual feast); a short hike to the top of the Saint-Michel tumulus just outside Carnac, (the latter two worth coinciding with market day at Carnac); the complex at Locmariaquer; and a pre-booked boat trip to the island of Gavrinis. Elsewhere and if enough appetite remains, a visit to the Kerzerho alignments and the Giants of Erdeven; the Crucuno dolmen and stone circle; and similar short visits to numerous other dolmens scattered around and about, would be very rewarding.

WAS KING ARTHUR A COMET?

By Peter Stone

Back in 2010 I attended a Hampshire Field Club conference on the 1600th anniversary of the withdrawal of Roman rule from Britannia during which a presentation began with the speaker threatening to throw out anyone who mentioned King Arthur in the follow up question and answer session. Perhaps this was not surprising given the amount of effort that has gone into inconclusive argument about the historical existence of such a person in the fifth or sixth century, the whereabouts of his castle and the evidence pointing to the possible location of a battle in which he sustained mortal wounds.

However the predicted arrival on December 19th last of the inter-stellar comet 3I/ATLAS at its closest point to Earth and the controversy aroused in the latter part of 2025 by a Harvard University professor, who claimed that its unusual features indicated that it was a technological artifact with possible sinister implications for life on Earth, reminded me of a book ^[1] written more than twenty years ago in which the authors attempted to identify King Arthur. Although the name 'Arthur' translates from the Welsh as 'the bear' the real Arthur, they contended, was neither human nor animal but was a sixth century comet.

At this point I have to tell you emphatically that the book is not of the sort that tells you that the Pyramids are a navigational aid built by aliens transported in flying saucers from an unseen planet situated in the outer solar system. It was co-authored by the late Mike Baillie, Professor Emeritus of Palaeoecology at Queen's University Belfast, whose internationally recognised contribution to dendrochronology and the refinement of radiocarbon calibration curves extended into researching possible connections between environmental change and historic and prehistoric events.

In the book he and his co-author Patrick McCafferty argue that Celtic and Arthurian myths were created in the early medieval period from attempts to explain Earth's encounter with a comet that broke up in the atmosphere in or about the year 536. Such an event, comparable to that witnessed by astronomers in 1992 when the orbit of comet Schumacher Levy 9 brought it too close to Jupiter, would have had catastrophic consequences for life on Earth and terrified people in an age that lacked scientific understanding. It could only be explained, they say, as the deed or deeds of a god. Hence the origin of the myths of Lugh in Ireland, their descendant Welsh and Arthurian stories and other like myths from around the world.

Historians, archaeologists and mythologists have all looked on King Arthur rather differently. Historians have searched in Welsh texts, as some still do, for evidence of a real person but without finding anything significant as yet. Some archaeologists, in the light of excavations at Tintagel, South Cadbury and Glastonbury Abbey have become less dismissive of the idea of a real person than the lecturer at the Hampshire Field Club conference but have not been able to find any conclusive evidence either. Until comparatively recently mythologists regarded the King Arthur stories as similar to others found across the world with a common point of origin. However, the consensus opinion now is that mythologies that tell a similar tale can have diverse origins which lends some support to Baillie's theory.

So what may have happened around the mid-sixth century? Scientists are in broad agreement that Greenland ice-core data indicate massive volcanic eruptions took place either in Iceland or Central America in 536 and at an unidentified location in 540. They have concluded that a vast quantity of sulphate aerosols was released into the upper atmosphere and in the following decades temperatures fell across the globe bringing about a number of catastrophic events. In Europe, for instance, summer temperatures fell by as much as 2.5°C and, as the contemporary historian Procopius records '*...the sun gave forth its light without brightness...*'. Crop failures made weakened populations vulnerable to disease and may well have been a factor in the spread of the bubonic plague, usually referred to

as the Plague of Justinian, that contributed to the failure of the emperor to reunite the Roman Empire. Across Eurasia archaeologists have found evidence of abandoned settlements, poor nutrition in human remains and population movement. From China there are reports of famine, cold summers and social unrest. Evidence of environment degradation in north west Europe has also been linked with Anglo-Saxon migration from north west Europe to Britain.

Baillie did not accept the scientists' opinion and contended that the Greenland ice core data did not show a sufficient presence of volcanic acidity. He placed greater weight on contemporary tree ring growth in Irish oaks and elsewhere, along with some unusual landscape features in Ireland, as evidence that the breakup of a comet was responsible. His argument did not convince most scientists and the general consensus remains that a volcanic winter provides the more likely explanation.

The book therefore sets out in detail a reinterpretation of Irish myths to show that the sun-god Lugh, King Arthur and probably Beowulf all have a common origin in the aftermath of a breakup of a comet, which is consistent with accepted scholarly opinion that myths originated in the pre-scientific past to explain natural phenomena. A good example of the kind of reasoning employed can be found in the description, quoted from Pliny, of the apparently unnerving arrival of Lugh the 'Celtic Apollo': *'It seems wonderful to me that the sun should rise in the west today and in the east every other day', said Bress to his Druids, 'It would be better for us if it were so ' replied the Druids, 'It is the radiance of Lugh of the Long Arm'*.^[2] Only a comet very close to the Earth, Baillie argues, could be described as coming up in the west with a 'long arm' and as bright as the sun.

It all seems quite plausible but the name 'Arthur' left me scratching my head for a moment because Baillie does not explain how it could have become attached to the mythical king. However, with some help from Co Pilot, I discovered that bears did not become extinct in the British Isles until c.425-594 AD which fits well with a mid-sixth century comet event. Their former presence in Ireland is evidenced today with the survival of the Celtic place name *Poll na mBear* which translates as 'Cave of the Bear'

so it seems possible that the fearsome reputation of the animal could have been likened by storytellers to the consequences of the breakup of a comet.

Although Baillie's reinterpretation of the sky god myths might seem satisfactory to the general reader it has not been accepted by Celtic scholars and it has not had much influence among mythologists although it has apparently attracted attention among archaeoastronomers.

What then can we conclude?

While putting this piece together it occurred to me that the King Arthur and Cerne Abbas Giant controversies have something in common. Both showed that expert interpretation of scientific evidence does not necessarily lead to a generally accepted explanation of past mysteries. However, the difference of opinion in the King Arthur case is between scientists and not between scientists and scholars - Baillie counts as both archaeologist and scientist.

So maybe the comet theory should not be ruled out. Otherwise, the stories of King Arthur would seem to be an exception to the now generally accepted opinion among scholars that myths were created to explain natural phenomena. Therefore, I will leave you to decide for yourself whether or not to accept it. At least you can now be certain that hostile aliens did not arrive to spoil last year's Christmas celebrations. Comet 3I/ATLAS continues on its way out of the solar system and the Harvard professor's theories continue to be treated by scientists as no more than speculation because as yet there is nothing to suggest that its unusual features are anything other than natural.

^[1] *The Celtic Gods: Comets in Irish Mythology* - Patrick McCafferty & Mike Baillie - Tempus 2005

^[2] *Naturalis Historia* – Pliny - translated *ibid*

Basingstoke's First Labour Mayor: George Trevelyan Pheby (1872-1951)

Roger Ottewill

There is a danger that George Pheby's contribution to the Labour Party's early involvement in the political life of Basingstoke can easily be overlooked. This is because pride of place tends to be given to Russell Howard. While Howard's input was undoubtedly formidable, as Basingstoke's second Labour mayor he was, in some respects, following in Pheby's footsteps. Indeed, it was Pheby who 'blazed the trail' since he was the first Labour council member to be appointed mayor as early as 1924, that is nine years before Howard.

George Pheby was born on 14 November 1872 in Lambeth. Following his father, in August 1887 he secured employment with the London and South Western Railway Company (from 1923 the Southern Railway) at Nine Elms. Rising to the rank of engine driver, in 1901 he was transferred to Basingstoke. A year later in December 1902 he married Grace Maud Elliot at St Barnabas Church, Kensington. By 1911, they were living in Queens Road Basingstoke with their only son, Charles, and a lodger.(1)

On his retirement in 1937:

(Pheby) was presented with the (Railway) Company's gold medal which was awarded only to those who had been in service not less than fifty years. A staunch trade unionist he was for many years secretary of (the local branch of) ASLEF and represented the branch on the local Trades Council. In his earlier years he was interested in the Locomotivemen's Mutual Improvement Society Class, and possessing an extensive knowledge of steam locomotion, he was at all times willing to teach younger men in the service.(2)

Thus, in a variety of ways he personified Basingstoke's role as a transport hub.

Turning to his municipal career, along with another Labour stalwart, George Tollerton, he was first elected to the Town Council at an uncontested by-election in June 1919.(3) He was required to stand for re-election in November and, as the results show, he came second (see Table 1), thereby retaining his seat, with Russell Howard also just securing election but the very narrow margin of three votes.

Table 1: Results of Basingstoke Borough Council 1 November 1919

Candidate	Note	Votes	Outcome
Frank Percival Wyeth*	a	1134	Elected
George Trevelyan Pheby*	Lab	1047	Elected
James Lunn	a	908	Elected
Russell Henry Howard	Lab	905	Elected
Francis James Lewis	Lab	902	Not elected
G.J. Simmonds	Lab	837	Not elected
Albert Millard*	a	810	Not elected
Walter King*	b	758	Not elected

Notes

* = sitting councillor seeking re-election

a = no designation given, assumed 'Independent'.

b = described himself as a 'free and unfettered Labour Candidate'.

Source: *Hants and Berks Gazette* 6 November 1919, p.6.

Pheby was a hard working councillor. This was evidenced by the fact that in 1922 he secured re-election, the only Labour candidate to be elected that year. As the results indicate (see Table 2), in this contest Pheby performed significantly better than Russell Howard, who failed to retain his seat.

Table 2: Results of Basingstoke Borough Council 1 November 1922

Name	Note	Votes	Outcome
Frank Percival Wyeth*	a	1703	Elected
James Lunn*	a	1522	Elected
George Trevelyan Pheby*	Lab	1314	Elected
Albert Crawford Munday	a	1311	Elected
Walter William Webber	a	1282	Not elected
Russell Henry Howard*	Lab	1062	Not elected
George Robert Munday	Lab	779	Not elected
Arthur Cook	Lab	701	Not elected

Notes

* = sitting councillor seeking re-election

a = no designation given, assumed 'Independent'.

Source: *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 4 November 1922, p.4.

In commenting on the outcome, Pheby thanked the electors 'for the confidence you have reposed in me ... You have judged me on my past actions and I am going to carry on in the future as I have done in the past.'⁽⁴⁾

The regard in which Pheby was held resulted in him being appointed mayor for the municipal year 1924/5. As the senior alderman Francis Hillary observed at the time:

... in Mr Pheby they had a representative of a section of the ratepayers from whom the Mayor of this borough had not been chosen before ... to put it in plain English Mr Pheby would be their first Labour Mayor ... Those who had served with Mr Pheby during the five years he had been on the Council recognised the good work he had done.

For his part, Pheby said that when he had first entered the Council Chamber he never expected to be honoured in this way.



*George Pheby in his Mayoral robes
(courtesy of Hampshire Cultural Trust)*

The regard in which Pheby was held resulted in him being appointed mayor for the municipal year 1924/5. As the senior alderman Francis Hillary observed at the time:

... the very admirable and efficient manner in which ... (Pheby) had discharged the responsible duties of the mayor ... and for his able and courteous conduct in the chair ... [He had] thrown himself most

indefatigably into the duties that had devolved upon him ... he thought they would all agree that during his year of office he had shown a broadminded spirit, a fairness and impartiality which had won the approval of all (Applause). He had ruled over council meetings with firmness but not so as to curtail debate and had concealed the iron hand under the velvet glove.

Given that he worked a night shift on the railways he was congratulated 'on the splendid constitution he possessed'. Reference was also made to his 'philanthropic work outside the Council' namely his chairmanship 'of the Finance Committee of the South Western Railway Orphanage at Woking'.⁽⁶⁾ It is noteworthy that the support he received from his wife, who was also active in the voluntary sector, was commended.

However, the regard in which Pheby had been held was not sufficient for him to be re-elected as alderman when his term of office ended in November 1926. At the triennial aldermanic election of that year, Charles Bowman and Thomas Chesterfield were elected aldermen in the place of George Pheby and George Willis, his predecessor as mayor. The voting was Bowman, 5 votes; Chesterfield, 5 votes; Willis, 4 votes; Pheby, 4 votes; Lunn, 1 vote; and Stratford, 1 vote. It was very unusual for a sitting alderman seeking re-election to be defeated. 'Two Aldermen Deposed' was the headline in the *Hants and Berks Gazette*. As soon as the results were announced, it was minuted that 'Mr G.T. Pheby left the meeting'. George Willis did so a little later, 'for a short time ... [occupying] one of the few seats available for the public and then' departing.⁽⁷⁾ Their sense of disappointment can only be surmised. In an attempt to regain his seat on the aldermanic bench in March 1927, Pheby only secured 2 votes (8), and in November 1929, 3 votes (9).

Thus, there was to be a gap of 14 years before Pheby again secured a seat on the council. He did so in August 1940, following Councillor Herbert Kingdon's resignation on joining the forces. In the ballot to choose his successor, George Pheby, received 8 votes and Robert Dudman 7 votes.⁽¹⁰⁾ Pheby's reputation was such that when elections were resumed in November 1945 he topped the poll (See Table 3).

Table 3: Results of Basingstoke Borough Council 1 November 1945

Name	Note	Votes	Outcome
George Trevelyan Pheby*	Lab	2689	Elected
Charles James Jefferys*	Ind	2645	Elected
Robert Dudman	CC	2028	Elected
Walter Harry Hayne*	CC	1920	Elected
Charles George Cooper	Lab	1703	Elected
Frank Percy Scott	CC	1535	Elected
Albert Lovick	Ind	1476	Elected
Bertie Weston	Lab	1459	Not elected
Edmund Knight	Ind	1314	Not elected
Elizabeth Maud Springall	Lab	1285	Not elected
Harry Frederick Budd	Lab	1258	Not elected
Nellie Jenvey Arlott	Ind	1237	Not elected
Marjorie Evelyn Theobald	CC	1236	Not elected
Albert Henry Victor Dolton	Lab	1112	Not elected
Jeanne Marie Bull	Ind	1044	Not elected
Bertie Constant	Lab	1034	Not elected
Cyril Wood	Ind	1032	Not elected
Frank Leonard Lutman	Ind	838	Not elected
Sidney Phillimore	Ind	403	Not elected

Note

* = sitting councillor seeking re-election

CC = Chamber of Commerce

Source: *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 2 November 1945, p.5.

In 1949 Pheby did not seek re-election. However, as reported, ‘The high regard in which Mr Pheby ... [was] held by his colleagues of the Labour Party was evinced at a celebration at the Winton House Restaurant ... when he and Mrs Pheby were presented with a wallet of money, in appreciation of the services he had rendered to the local Party and to mark his retirement from the Borough council’.(11)

Pheby died unexpectedly, aged 78, in 1951. As recorded in his obituary:

(He was) a man of strong character ... (and) carried through with unqualified success any duties he undertook. He always contributed a balanced, commonsense argument in debate, and his moderate views won him the respect of his political opponents as well as the support of his own party.

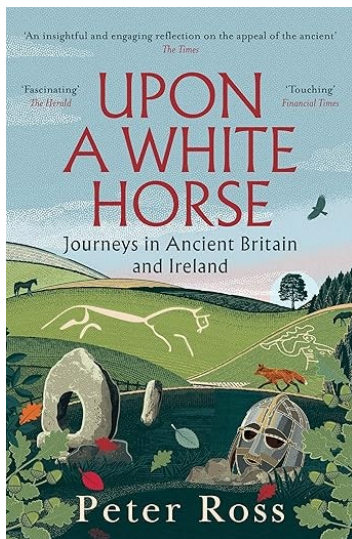
His name would ‘be long remembered and cherished in this town’.(12) Clearly, he had done much to advance the cause of Basingstoke Labour Party.

Notes

1. 1911 Census RG14/110/1/7 Schedule 199.
2. Extract from his obituary. *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 16 February 1951, p.7.
3. *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 21 June 1919, p.5.
4. *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 20 November 1924, p.4.
5. Basingstoke Borough Printed Minutes 1925, HRO 148M71/11/28, 17 September 1925, unpaginated.
6. *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 14 November 1925, p.9.
7. Basingstoke Borough Printed Minutes 1926, HRO 148M71/11/29, 9 November 1926, unpaginated; *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 13 November 1926, p.6.
8. Basingstoke Borough Printed Minute Book 1927-1930, HRO 148M71/1/3/21, 10 March 1927, unpaginated.
9. Basingstoke Borough Printed Minute Book 1927-1930, HRO 148M71/1/3/21, 9 November 1929, unpaginated.
10. Basingstoke Borough Printed Minute Book 1939-1946, HRO 148M71/1/3/21, 1 August 1940, p.205.
11. *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 5 May 1949, p.6.
12. *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 16 February 1951, p.7.

BOOK SHELF

UPON A WHITE HORSE: Journeys in Ancient Britain and Ireland by Peter Ross



In this beautifully written and thought-provoking book, Peter Ross visits some of Britain and Ireland's most iconic ancient sites.

Inspired by his late grandparents, who were volunteer archaeologists, Ross skilfully blends legend, history, contemporary culture and the latest archaeological theories. He asks what did stone circles, long barrows and chalk figures mean to the people who built them? And what do they mean to us today?

A journalist by trade, Ross' prose is lyrical, humorous, and insightful. Accompanied by modern-day Druid, King Arthur, Ross

attends the midwinter solstice celebration at Stonehenge. As self-appointed guardian of the stones, King Arthur refuses to pay for parking, and so they travel on the bus, his sword wedged between the seats. At the stones, historian Jennifer Wexler explains: "It's a place people returned to and put their own meaning on over a long period of time." Today, nothing much has changed. A vast crowd chants, sings, and plays the didgeridoo, each welcoming the sunrise in their own way.

At West Kennet long barrow, Ross senses the Neolithic dead 'were still present as memories and stories, their lives lingering in the unstirred air'. All Cannings Long Barrow in Wiltshire was built by farmer Tim Daw in 2014 in the style of a Neolithic burial chamber for the interment of 21st century ashes. When Ross met Tim, he had already sold all 340 niches.

In other chapters, Ross muses on the enigmatic bog bodies of Ireland, the Vikings in Shetland and why the recent desecration of Sycamore Gap was so deeply felt.

Ross' take on the Folkestone drums is particularly poignant. These four, small, cylindrical, chalk drums were placed in the graves of three children in Yorkshire some five thousand years ago, and are now in the British Museum. He writes: 'It is the business of archaeology to learn about people of the past.... but I did wish... that they had not been found, that they were still serving their purpose, whatever that was, watching over young bones in the old dark.'

Ultimately, no-one knows what these ancient places meant to the people who built them. They are enduringly mysterious and appealing, blank canvases for our own ideas and beliefs. Perhaps that is why people still enthusiastically scour the Uffington White Horse to preserve its chalk outline, just as they have done for thousands of years.

As Ross so eloquently says: "There is something about ancient places that seems to fill some hollow in our souls."

Upon a White Horse is published by Headline and the hardback edition costs £22.

Penny Ingham

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