

WEAG Chairman's Report March 2012

We have had another busy year, well attended talks and active diggers at Copped Hall. We also enrolled over twenty five new members.

At the 2011 AGM no problems arose, Harvey then told us about the 2010 training dig at Syon Park attended mainly by Birkbeck diploma students. In April Ben Roberts of the BM spoke on Religion and Ritual in Prehistoric Britain; there are landscapes that have been sacred for millennia with deposits, burials, structures.....we can only think about them: why put metalwork into rivers, ritual pits, etc?

At the Rudge, Andrew Shapland spoke about the Cretan Bull leapers depicted in murals at Knobbus and the BM tiny model. What was the meaning of this dangerous sport with athletic men and women? At the Ashmolean Museum there are Evans' Knossos frescoes, boys etc GO AND LOOK. Andrew complimented us on being such a good audience.

At the final meeting Sam Moorhead, an old WEAG friend from the British Museum, spoke on the events of 410 in the Roman Empire, the Army pulled out of Britain - (the main forces remained) or are the documents misread? Rome fell to Alaric in August...The whole story is much longer from disturbances in the mid 4C to the Barbarian invasions by Vandalg Goths - see Sam's book. In September our professional member John Shepherd spoke about the possible dovecote at Copped Hall (pigeons were a useful protein source) - it was associated with the Tudor house.

In October Ian Richardson of the BM, spoke about the Portable Antiquities Scheme which has replaced the ancient Treasure Trove act. Its aim is to monitor metalwork finds more than 400 years old from metal detectors so they can be conserved valued and properly sold, museums rather than collectors. But do metal detectors know about this, informing archaeologists so the finds are excavated in context. At a recent meeting this was thought to be unlikely,

Black Death in November by Jelena Bekvalac of the Museum of London - the plague began when in Nov 1348 it rapidly spread over England until Summer 1349, killing a third of the population, forever changing society and economy.

Andrew Shapland returned in December, how Greek Bronze age sites were dug by the romantic Schleiman: I looked into the face of Aggamemnon...and later digs by Archaeologists.

The social in January was rather poorly attended. Why? feedback please. In Feb 2012 we had a members meeting John S on using Geophysics latest and Tina on Copt Hall 2011 report to follow.

All talks were summarised in the WEAG REVIEW, distributed at the Rudge.

WEAG's Research & Excavation in 2011

In May, Shaun McClory organised another excellent walk, this time around the Coopersale area. The member's dig was held as usual late May/early June at Copped Hall with good progress being made in the rose garden and dove cote trenches with at least 20 members attending each day.

The second year of the CHTAP Training Weekend digs for beginners, held to coincide with the Festival of British Archaeology, was again fully booked and well attended despite torrential rain! The two August CHTAP five-day Field Schools allowed us to continue work started in May/June although they were only attended by ~11 diggers each day.

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Presentations on the summer's work at Copped Hall were given to the society in September by John Shepherd, focusing on the dove cote trench, and in February by Christina Holloway, concentrating on progress in the rose garden trench. The same format of digs will be followed for 2012 and we look forward to you joining us. WEAG has also continued to raise its profile with other local archaeological and historical groups, in particular, by providing equipment and expertise to perform geophysical surveying using resistivity, magnetometry and ground penetrating radar techniques.

Thanks to all who have worked for WEAG, diggers, publicity, finances, food, technology, WEAG News, admin, etc. We will continue to meet at WCHS for talks, I hope you will enjoy the programme.

Gil Burn