

Bradford on Avon Museum

The *Museletter*



Summer 2018

www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk

QUERN STONE



There is a quern stone in Bradford on Avon Museum. It's of no use to us today, but our ancestors found it invaluable for life. The name comes from Old English *cweorn(e)* and refers to a simple hand-mill used to grind grains, typically wheat, by removing the indigestible cellulose outer coating to release the nutrients inside.

When early man began to rely on grain as part of his diet he needed to find a way of removing the outer casing to make it more easily digestible. The saddle quern was the solution. It consisted of a flat or dish-shaped stone across which a hand held, roughly cylindrical, upper stone was pushed and pulled backwards and forwards. This was back-breaking work, because significant pressure had to be applied to the rubbing stone to break open the grain and reduce the grain to meal. Moreover, this work was almost always carried out by women.

It is the oldest specific milling tool, reaching Britain in around 4000BC. Saddle querns have been found in a number of Neolithic sites and their use continued in this country for around three and a half thousand years until something better, in the shape of the rotary quern, made an appearance in about 400BC. A saddle quern was found in the Budbury area of Bradford. This area, the subject of excavations in the late 1960s, is believed to be the site of an early Iron Age Hill Fort. Fragments of early Iron Age pottery turn up very occasionally.

The quern in the Museum is half of a rotary quern. It is of Roman date and is made of a hard quartzite stone, possibly a Sarsen stone, from the Marlborough Downs, and comes from the St Laurence School villa site, excavated in 1969.

The rotary quern was a huge leap forward in technology because it was possible to achieve the same result much faster, and with far less physical effort than

with the saddle quern. When complete, a rotary quern comprises two circular stones, ideally hard-wearing and abrasive, the top one sometimes shaped like an inverted plant pot, and hence often referred to as a "beehive" quern. This top stone was rotated by means of a handle driven into a hole in the side, and an additional hole in the centre of the top stone allowed grain to trickle down to be ground between the faces of the two stones before spilling out as the final product – flour.

This is the type you can see in the Museum, though it is incomplete, having only the lower stone. This new technology represented a revolution in milling: the new method of turning one circular stone over another was to last until the advent of modern machine milling.

It had another, arguably more important, outcome: it greatly reduced for women the time-consuming drudgery of producing flour for the staple of life – bread – which had been the lot of their forebears. They would now have more time to devote to child rearing and animal husbandry. They might also have time for leisure!

Valerie Holden, Museum Trustee.

A HALF FULL BOTTLE OF AMBERGRIS

It sits humbly on a shelf in a glass display case labelled 'Ess Ambergris' at the Christopher pharmacy in the Bradford on Avon Museum. I believe that the contents were used as a constituent component of an exotic perfume created by Richard Christopher, the pharmacist. He is said to have learned the formula on a visit to the Far East and he marketed the product under the name of 'Siva' oriental products; in the same cabinet is a Winchester bottle with the label 'Siva' and containing the same golden orange colour liquid - the end product, along with other examples of the range.

In June 1911 Mr Christopher was advertising his Siva product as the Coronation perfume. His advertisement appears on page 1 of the Bradford on Avon official programme celebrating the Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary. He describes it as a perfect blending of the most delicious oriental odours, a

refined perfume of subtle fragrance and distinctive character, remarkable for its sweetness and delicacy: an ideal present. Prices were 10 pence halfpenny, 1/6, 2/6 and 5/- (5/- is 25p in new money, but by contemporary values, estimated to be worth £28 today)

But what is Ambergris?

It is a rare, expensive, exotic material used in the perfume business and has an extraordinary history. Its source is the sperm whale, whose diet includes the giant squid. There are various parts of a giant squid that a sperm whale cannot digest and these are regurgitated by the whale. The substance floats in the ocean where it can remain for months or years and where it experiences chemical changes of oxidation and photo degradation until it becomes washed up on a beach and can present to a lucky unsuspecting finder as a small football-shaped mass weighing from 15grams to 50 kg.

It has been found on British beaches, and its potential as a windfall, if recognised, is huge as it can have considerable value. Memo: when visiting a beach always have a large plastic bag convenient to contain your find!

The modern refined substance used in the perfume industry today is called Ambroxan, an organic chemical, and is produced synthetically; not as romantic as the natural material!

Historically, it was used by the ancient Egyptians as incense; modern Egyptians use it to scent cigarettes. During the time of plague people were known to carry a ball of it as an antidote, and it has been used as a flavouring for food. King Charles II's favourite dish was a serving of eggs with Ambergris!

The contents of the bottle to me are a mystery substance about which I can only fantasize.

What does it smell of?

Does it have magic properties?

Did they sell a lot of it?

Who would have bought such an exotic expensive product?

Imagine the dynamism of Richard Christopher, who was prepared to risk the investment of expensive ingredients in this product. He was much more than a counter of pills and purveyor of standard medicines. He had an exciting, modern risk-taking business philosophy.

Edward Shaw

UPDATE ON DNA AND THE ANGLO-SAXON 'INVASIONS'

In the discussion following Roy's fascinating talk on the 'Anglo-Saxons', (Discussion Group, May 2018) the question arose of what kind of 'Invasion' was this event, following the collapse of Roman rule in Britain? Was it a mass settlement in eastern and central England (as traditionally understood), or an elite takeover, or a mix of the two in different areas?

Following the meeting, I emailed David Reich, Professor of Genetics at Harvard University in the USA about the current genetic evidence for the movement of people into Britain after the end of the Roman Empire. (He has recently had his and other's work on DNA and the prehistoric 'Bell Beaker culture package' reported in *Current Archaeology* and *British Archaeology*). From the documents he sent me, it seems that the current state of DNA evidence suggests: a significant but limited Anglo-Saxon migration to Britain from the continent. This contributed under 50% (and most likely in the range of 10–40%) to the genetics of Central/Southern England, as measured in the current population. He personally estimated it as about 30%. This 30% conclusion is supported by a more limited sample taken from actual bodies found in archaeological contexts in the Cambridge region.

So, this suggests that a sizeable number of germanic incomers did arrive in the 5th century AD, but they were always greatly outnumbered by a majority population (c.70%), which had been here since the Roman Empire and earlier. This suggests that 'Anglo-Saxon culture' (brooches, the English language etc.) was adopted by British people because this was the way of life of the dominant newcomers. So, no huge change in population. This probably varied from area to area, but this seems to be the picture overall. This is in line with a lot of modern thinking but very different to the old traditional understanding. It is also very different to the impression we get from the surviving (albeit very limited) literature, which emphasises 'fire and the sword'.

Martyn Whittock

AN OLD HORSESHOE FOUND AT BUDBURY

In 1986 Adrian Powell was keeping a watching brief over the service trench excavations for the houses which were to be built at Budbury Ridge. The Museum Research group are presently identifying his finds, which are on loan from the Powell family.

Among the finds were 3 horseshoes he had found on the spoil heap. It fell to me to draw and describe them. I knew nothing about such items so got on to the Portable Antiquities Scheme online, which is run by the British Museum and the National Museum of Wales. There I found that the definitive reference book in use was: Clark, J. : *The Medieval Horse and its Equipment*, Museum of London Press, 2004. I found a free, accessible copy online and the first horseshoe I needed on p. 86.

Our Horseshoe: 100mm wide by 110mm long by 5mm thick; Weight: 117gm

6 round nail holes, 3 each side: 5mm diameter in deep depressions

One T-shaped nail still in situ

Indications of 'punching through' on reverse

Made of iron with wavy edges

2 shallow calkins (heel reinforcements)

These criteria exactly match Clarke's 'type 2A', dated 1050 to 1150 AD, a type not in use before the Norman Conquest.

Gill Winfield



Top view showing shape



Side view showing nail

A 'REFRESHED' IRON DUKE

The Iron Duke was unveiled in September 2016, looking impressive in all its industrial glory. Since then, it has had to withstand the exigencies of the British weather, including 'meteorological beasts' from every direction. The roof & glass side-panels have helped to protect it, but they don't form an hermetically sealed box and were never designed to do so. Inevitably, some surface rust has developed. In addition, the Iron Duke has become a lifestyle haven for loads of spiders. What is so attractive about living there?!

Having set aside some funds for future maintenance, we decided it was appropriate to refresh the Iron Duke, to coincide with the erection of smart new signage on 28th June. Julian, the leader of the team from Dorothea in Bristol that carried out the original restoration work, came over for a day and worked with us, advising what needed to be done. Areas affected by rust were sanded and cleaned, and then treated with Awatrol oil, which inhibits rust formation and leaves an attractive sheen covering. After a further half-day's work, the work was complete. We were heartened by the number of visitors who came to see the Iron Duke while we were there, and made complimentary remarks about it. However, their interest was limited to asking questions and reading the legends. Offers of a piece of sandpaper were all politely declined!

Mervyn Harris



Surface rust on roller



Chris and Mervyn busy with oil & brushes

MUSEUM RESEARCH GROUP GEOPHYSICS UPDATE

Our Museum Research Group is aiming to purchase a resistance meter in order to carry out our own geophysical surveys, rather than having to borrow kit from other societies as we have done in the past. This will be dependent on whether we can secure funding as the total cost would be approximately £3,000. We hope to apply for a Town Council grant to help with this. Museum member, Rob Arkell, has kindly offered to take on the role of MRG Geophysics Co-ordinator, and to this end, he has been trialling possible new kit on his site at Rowley. This is an abridged version of his report:

Trial of Frobisher TAR3 Resistivity Unit at Rowley

Background - John Samways (Bath & Counties Archaeological Soc) offered to lend us the equipment for 4 days in April 2018 so that its suitability for use by the Museum Research Group could be assessed. The site for a trial would need to have known archaeological features. The owner of the Deserted Medieval Village at Rowley (between Westwood and Farleigh Hungerford) had expressed interest in a survey and gave permission. (The site of Rowley village is now in Somerset but was listed as part of the Bradford Hundred until 1831.)

The loan time extended to 8 full days which allowed a significant area of the

fields on both sides of the road at Rowley to be surveyed (23,200 sq-metres or 5.74 acres) and the results compared with parch-mark surveys.

Equipment - The unit comprises a control box, which comes in a padded carrying case, and a frame to which the control box is attached, with leads to connect to 2 stainless steel probes at 0.5m spacing on the frame (0.5m spacing will measure to a depth of 0.5m. 1m spacing will measure to 1m depth) and 2 remote probes at the end of a 50m cable. The unit can operate in grid or line mode. Grids are usually 20m by 20m and the number of readings per metre is selected at the start of a survey. Lines are typically 20m in length and the use of multiple probes enables a resistance profile to be calculated. Once a grid is started readings are taken automatically. Readings taken in error can be deleted and retaken.

Data is stored on a photo memory card which can be read onto a computer with the appropriate socket. The unit has lithium-ion batteries which can be charged from the mains or with a car phone charger. The grid data is analysed by a freeware program called Snuffler, and the line data by a demonstration version of RES2DINV.

User Experience - Compared with the older TR/CIA equipment in use at BACAS the unit is lighter and takes readings more quickly.

800 readings on a BACAS unit will take typically 25 to 30 minutes whereas the Frobisher unit takes 20 to 25 minutes. The audible beep when a reading is taken is louder, which is a plus point for older users. The frame can be held at differing positions to accommodate users of different heights.

Effectiveness - Resistivity meters can identify areas of high resistance associated with stone in the ground (walls) or areas of low resistance where soil holds water (ditches or robbed out walls). High resistance areas are black and low resistance areas are white. 'Barn' 1 and the 'Farmhouse' from the Earthworks Survey show up clearly. A different shape was revealed at the 'Church'. 'Barn' 2 was not seen as the Ordnance Survey map shows it to be outside the survey area. A new feature was found to the East of the 'Farmhouse'. The hollow ways are identifiable as lines of low resistance.

Rowley Earthworks Survey Resistivity Survey Output Plot

Recommendation - Purchase of the Frobisher TAR3 Resistance Meter kit, TAR3 Pseudo-section kit and TAR3 Extension Bar kit (1m).

Many thanks to Rob, who will be giving a talk on his research at Rowley for Discussion Group on Wed, 7th November.

Sophie Hawke

REFRESH YOUR MEMORY

I'm an architectural historian and teach University students the importance of capturing and understanding social history as a backdrop to architecture. I use a well-known saying that has been ascribed to a range of people from Cicero to Maya Angelou, "You don't know where you're going until you know where you've been." Accessing the past can take many forms, not least visiting a museum, but also listening to first-hand accounts of history from others can be informative, moving, compelling and amusing, and can also spark a memory in our minds that we thought long forgotten.

The Bradford Hundred Memory Bank was set up by the Museum to record the memories of people living in Bradford on Avon and the surrounding villages. A collection originated from work by Margaret Dobson, who initially accumulated reminiscences for her book *Bradford Voices: Life in Bradford on Avon, 1900-2010* (2nd edition, Ex Libris Press, 2011).

After making a digital recording with a willing and talkative interviewee, recorded words are then transcribed, checked and approved by the interviewee and only then do we deposit copies at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham (WSHC). We also keep copies within the Museum, which form part of our own collection, and soon we hope to make these available as a valuable resource both in the Museum and online.

Stephanie Laslett and I recently attended a WSHC workshop, which enabled us to see how many other local museums were setting up their own memory banks. Terry Bracher, the Archives and Local Studies Manager for Wiltshire Council, also guided us through the various aspects of collecting reminiscences. He talked about the best practice of interview techniques; the most reliable way to make the recordings; gave us tips on the most effective ways of transcribing, and the most efficient ways of storing material for future use. What we learned reinforced ideas that our own Memory Bank already had in

and interesting ideas that we hadn't yet considered. Terry also explained that we are able to borrow their state-of-the-art recorders, which resemble large walkie-talkies, are covered in buttons, but thankfully come with a comprehensive instruction manual!

Recently, we put out a request asking if anyone was interested in getting involved and we had our first 'new team' meeting, under the guidance of Margaret. With our new team of interviewers and transcribers, we are going to start some mini-training sessions and set up simple, fail-safe measures to make the whole process efficient, interesting and above all, entertaining.

We have people lined up for interviews and dates are going in the diary. If you would like to get more involved, either as an interviewer, a transcriber, or even as an interviewee, please let us know!

Sarah Howard
0777 171 4497

DISCUSSION GROUP

Talks for 2018

Discussion Group covers a wide range of subjects, and if you haven't been along to a session yet, do try it out.

The meetings take place on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm in the Library Meeting Room, and are FREE to members (please remember to bring along your new, blue membership card!). Non-members can attend one session before being asked to join. If you know of someone who isn't a member, do bring them along – it's a great introduction to the Museum.

2018 sessions:

Wednesday 4th July

The true story of our unique railway station and its restoration – a talk to launch the Footbridge Canopy Project
Led by Peter Mann

Wednesday 1st August

NO MEETING

Wednesday 5th September

St Laurence School and its Roman villa
Led by Sophie Hawke

Wednesday 3rd October

The diaries of Beth Hignall – 'It makes you spit!'
Led by Colin Johns

Wednesday 7th November

Rowley – Bradford's lost medieval village
Led by Rob Arkell

Wednesday 5th December

Local History Question Time (sort of Gardener's Question Time meets Antiques Roadshow)
Our Panel: Roy Canham, Roger Clark, Ivor Slocombe and Pam Slocombe

If you would like to offer to lead a session in 2019, please contact Kate Turnbull (Museum Trustee) on 01225 866328 or at turnbullke@googlemail.com

EVENTS COMING UP ...

Holy Trinity Church Street Fair

Saturday 7th July

Museum stall. Volunteers needed please.

Romans Exhibition

Library Meeting Room

August

Autumn Guest Lecture - details TBC

Museums at Night - details TBC

"Countdown to Peace" - organised by Simon McNeill Ritchie on behalf of Town Council. A remembrance of the ending of WW1. 30+ events throughout the town.

Holy Trinity Church Xmas Tree Festival -

December

Details to follow

Museum Trustees:

Chris Dale (Hon. Treasurer): 862198

Mervyn Harris (Hon. Chairman):
863440

Sophie Hawke: 863934

Valerie Holden (Hon. Secretary):
869159

Sarah Howard: 07771 714497

Peter Mann: 07779 347962

Ivor Slocombe: 862525

Kate Turnbull (Membership): 866328

Honorary Patrons

Elizabeth Cartwright-Hignett,
(President)

John Banks (Vice President)

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Additional Office Holders:

Roger Clark (Hon Curator): 865785

Roger Jones (Newsletter) 865191

Stewards' Organisers:

Peter Mann: 07779347962

Gillian King: 866387

Below: Market Street in the 1950s. From the book *Brylcreem and Broken Biscuits*



SUBSCRIPTIONS

Memberships run from 1st January each year. The subs are:

Individual member: £15

Family membership: £20

Cheques or cash can be sent to Chris Dale (treasurer); or Kate Turnbull (membership), whose contact details are given below.

For those who pay by standing order this can continue to be on the anniversary of joining.

If you haven't already set up a standing order, could you consider doing so now?

This can be done via on-line banking (if you have this) to:

Bradford on Avon Museum Society

Sort code: 30 98 75

Account number: 50243560

And please give your name as the reference (or, if you prefer, contact us for a standing order form). Thank you.

We are issuing annual membership cards now, which will secure your Member's discount at events and talks; and there will be an opportunity to check/amend your details.

Thank you for your continuing support which is vital to the Museum's future.

Brylcreem and Broken Biscuits, the shop window trail which took place in 2013 to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, is happening again this summer. Bradford on Avon Museum member, Stephanie Laslett, hopes shop owners will be happy to display a small panel showing exactly what was in each shop back in 1952, with archive photographs and memories of local residents, plus a children's trail of 1950s sweets to spot. It takes place from Saturday 21 July to Sunday 2 September and Stephanie will be visiting the shops the week beforehand to deliver the panels.

You may have seen a feature in the 22 June issue of the *Wiltshire Times* with several photographs from the BoA Museum collection, Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre and local residents.