

Educational Officer Update

An overview of the HLF funded BACAS Educational Project

2009 has been yet another exciting and very successful year for the HLF funded BACAS *Archaeology for All at Upper Row Farm* project, building further on the successes of the previous year's work. We've made advances in many areas and aspects.

Tavis Walker

The year started with a huge amount of effort and hard labour from many members of the Society who helped make the Museum Barn a more presentable, safe, user-friendly area. It has become the arena for many successful visits this year. Improvements have included the installation of kitchen facilities. As well as being extremely useful for the sterling catering work that is carried out on open days, it has also been a pleasure to be able to offer hot drinks to the volunteers, supervisors and historical groups that have attended this year. Having two extra sinks has also helped with the logistics of getting a class of grubby pupils' hands clean before lunch! The installation of new electric sockets, lights and a ring main has made presentations and work in the barn a lot more productive and professional.

Glass display cabinets were kindly donated by the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institute so that some of the finds from the Upper Row Farm area could be put on display. The Kingswood collection of artefacts has also been incorporated to help build up a comprehensive chronological display. In addition to the work in the barn, further infrastructure progress has been made by Wessex Water's kind donation of another portacabin. This is being converted into a store for open day material, the geophysics equipment, the BACAS Library, educational resources and teaching aids.

Our intentions for the Museum Barn this year include working on the displays, showcasing much of the excellent material that has been generated by the Society over the years and hopefully presenting some of the many small finds that have been excavated and recorded during fieldwork at Upper Row Farm. In addition to the artefact-based chronology, we hope to tie this into a display of the more recent history of the farm. Several interesting artefacts have come to light during the clearing out of the old outbuildings including enormous forge bellows, thatching tools, Victorian seed hoppers and water pumps. These all help to build up a picture of life and change on the farm over the last century. Specific displays on certain aspects such as bones, pottery, building materials, and the Society's projects will also be incorporated. There is obviously a huge amount of work to be done here, with a mass of material very deserving of excellent presentation. The potential to construct inspiring, informative and useful displays from this material is boundless and will contribute towards the creation of a first class heritage facility. If any of our members have creative or artistic experience and would like to get involved in helping fulfil the potential of the displays, please do get in touch.

In school and on site, school visits have continued throughout the year and have appreciated the improved facilities at the farm. As well as delivering the curriculum-based sessions (based on the KS2 Romans topic), we have been able to provide more bespoke sessions. A particularly successful one was delivered during Bathford School's local history week. The session, *Bathford Through Time*, involved each class in the school focusing on a specific period of the community's history. Work with Bath City College has continued with the development of "*Science in Archaeology*" activities. Sessions relating to the Tudors and other aspects of history have also been carried out across schools in BANES, Wiltshire and Somerset.

Group visits to the farm have been a focus in 2009 with very successful and well attended visits by Freshford and Bathwick historical societies. The Bathwick Local History Society continued their tour of Upper Row Farm with a private tour of the usually off limits areas of the 14th Century The George Inn. Freshford Local History Society was also treated to a talk on Roman Gardens by Claire Ryley, who spoke about the work that is being carried out to dramatically increase the size of the Time Team Roman Garden. This will be a super resource for visitors to the farm in 2010 to enjoy.

A number of successful sessions have been carried out with the popular and oversubscribed West Wilts YAC (Young Archaeologist Club), who have been a real pleasure to work with because of their endless enthusiasm, interest and knowledge. They have been involved with helping clean finds from the excavation, conducting various experimental archaeological activities, including a lot of work on the roundhouse construction, and they even organised for two Celts to come to the farm to really bring that era to life. The Woodland Folk Ventures, a teenage youth group, have also attended a number of sessions at the farm throughout the year, also helping to further the construction of the roundhouse.

The roundhouse on Blacklands, having started life as a single panel of wattle and daub, soon developed with the enthusiasm and kind donation of materials from Jess of Upper Row Farm and Ben Cross of the National Trust and Ron Dawson who has not only donated the thatch but also given his time freely in not only helping put the thatch on but also in the instruction and teaching of the basics of the art. Help with the educational sessions on the roundhouse and the hard labour of getting the roof super structure up has tirelessly been provided by Shaun Lambdin. Groups and schools working on the roundhouse are really inspired by the hands on approach to building such a structure using age old skills. The thinking and investigative skills developed through such a project has been fantastic to witness. When finished, this will continue to be a splendid, inspiring resource on which a number of other educational activities can be built around.

This is the final year of funding of the initial Heritage Lottery grant, although work is already underway to try and help secure further funding, which is no easy task in the present economic climate. This will also be my final year as the Educational Officer although I am very keen to stay involved with the Society and the Education Project. 2010 promises to be another fruitful and eventful

year with growing demand from schools (some much further afield (Dorset!)) for curriculum-based and roundhouse building activities, plans already in place for further open days, sessions with other groups such as the

Figure 1
Members of the West Wilts Young Archaeologists Club working on the roundhouse with the BACAS Educational Officer Tavis Walker.

Figure 2
Students from Bath City College energetically digging test pits as part of their college course Science in Archaeology.



Peasedown Youth Group and continuing work with the West Wilts YAC. There is an enormous amount of work to be done to make sure that as the project enters a new phase in September 2010 that all the previous hard work that has been invested before, does not go to waste. So please if you have any spare time and would like to get involved please feel free to get in touch. Sincere thanks again to everyone who contributed in 2009.

