



East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2009

RECENT EVENTS

Our last EDAS lecture was "**The Wyndhams of Dinton Park: a house born out of riots, the chase, and fine red wines**" with James Grasby. James, who is based at Warminster, is a Senior Curator for the National Trust, with responsibility for all NT Houses south of Stourhead. James told us about the architecture of the later extended "Phillip's House", which had been designed and built by Wyatt, the prestigious architect of the time. James was also very knowledgeable about the important families around Dinton. When he told us about the lives of the Wyndhams themselves, it really made us feel that we knew them. One side of the family was hunting mad, wasting all their time fox-hunting or rat trapping. In complete contrast, George was one of William Wyndham's sons who believed in equality and was very liberal for the time. He got married, and then immediately he and his wife emigrated to the then 'opening-up' Australia, where great fortunes could be made. The journey, and all post and goods, took 6 months between the two continents, and the Wyndams realised that they would never see their son again. George arrived in New South Wales, bought up a cleared but bankrupt estate, and prospered. He ordered some mixed vines from Europe, including the then uncommon Shiraz red grape, and 1832 started a large vineyard in the Hunter Valley. Although there have been many mergers between wine producers over the years, nearly 200 years later you can still go into Waitrose in Dorchester and buy Shiraz Wine from the Hunter Estate in New South Wales.

James was a very knowledgeable and excellent speaker; in the second half he also 'set the scene' by entertaining us with Australian jokes. We thank him very much for a very interesting and enjoyable talk.

Update on the Stourpaine Dig

After a faltering start owing to the delayed harvest, the site at Stourpaine provided a rich and challenging arena for the EDAS summer dig. During the four weeks, some 25 members honed their excavation skills investigating a variety of features dating from the early Iron Age to the fourth century A.D. Clearly Stourpaine was a very desirable place to live, since many of the 40 features recorded cut, or were cut by, those from other periods, making interpretation tricky but yielding up a huge number of finds. Those finds included household items such as quernstones and loom weights, daub and bronze coins, in addition to heaps of pottery, animal bones and soil samples. It will take time to process these latter items and to build a picture of activity on the site two millennia ago, but it is hoped that an initial report will be ready for inclusion with the newsletter early in the new year.

Dave Stewart

Wimborne Square Archaeological Investigation

The dig has now finished, and was deemed to be a real success, with some significant finds and a lot of interest from the public. Lilian is preparing a fuller article for the December Newsletter.

POOLE HARBOUR HERITAGE PROJECT LIMITED

DORSET ALUM AND COPPERAS INDUSTRY – UPDATE

Two small excavations connected with the research into the Dorset Alum and Copperas Industries have taken place this year and the interim reports are now being prepared.

The first took place at Kimmeridge over two weeks in May. Whilst finds were few, the excavation was successful in locating two furnaces uncovered during building work in the 1970s. Possible features highlighted during a geophysical examination of two paddocks just outside the scheduled area were investigated with the use of a digger but unfortunately no additional structures were located. Geomorphologist, Dr Clare Wilson of Stirling University again spent two days with us and took samples for analysis. There is further recording work and sampling still to

be undertaken at Kimmeridge and it is hoped this can be completed by the end of the year. The excavation at Kimmeridge was not easy due to the heavy clay soil and our thanks go to the members of EDAS who bravely accepted the difficult conditions and contributed so much to a very enjoyable “dig”.



Studland Heath September 2009

September saw the postponed excavation at Studland taking place. This had to be put off from earlier in the year due to the adverse weather conditions over the winter. Following completion of the walk-over survey of the Heath and Greenlands, and the preparation of an interim report, the results were analysed and a 100m² area was chosen for a more detailed examination. Mark Corney conducted a topographical survey in the early summer and this was followed by a geophysical survey. From this data one circle was chosen to be the focus of an excavation.

The excavation at Studland proved much easier than the previous one at Kimmeridge as once the turf layer had been removed a deep deposit of sand was revealed. Again our thanks go to the EDAS members who assisted with the work.

A 3m square was cut into the centre of the circle. A further 18m long trench was excavated, running from the centre of the circle, cutting through the earthwork bank, and on to a distance of 5m outside the circle. Disappointingly, as in our previous excavations, finds were few and at the present time we are no nearer to understanding the function of the “circles”. Dr. Wilson came down from Stirling University and took away samples for further investigation and it is hoped that analysis of these may shed more light on the reason for the “circles”. Dr Wilson’s initial stratigraphical analysis suggests construction within the last 500 years which would place them within the timescale to fit in with alum/copperas production but at present their connection with the industry cannot be confirmed. There is the possibility of further work on the circles, perhaps at Greenlands but at the time of writing this is still at the discussion stage.

Gill Broadbent Nov. 2009

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The dates for EDAS events are underlined. The monthly evening lectures start at 7.30pm. Walks and field visits usually meet at 10.30 am at the published Grid Reference. Ring the leader if the weather is doubtful or if more details are required.

2009

Wed 11 Nov EDAS Lecture: “**Town life in Roman Britain**” with Dr Louise Revell of Southampton University.

Wed 9 Dec EDAS Lecture: “**Easter Island**” with Dr Kate Welham of Bournemouth University.

2010

Wed 13 Jan EDAS Lecture: “**Cerne Abbas**” with Rob Curtis, Blue Badge Guide

Wed 10 Feb EDAS Lecture: “**Tarrant Monkton**” with Jeremy Webster.