



a material that decays, was a place for the living, whilst the permanent Stonehenge was for the dead. His simple explanation gave Mike the motivation to take on the big challenge to organise the project.

One basic question the team addressed was why the location had been chosen. They found evidence to prove that it had been recognised as special since the early Mesolithic. These include an alignment of three massive timber posts located where the car park used to stand and a hearth in the centre of the area later used to build the Stonehenge henge monument. Down by the river near where the Bluestonehenge once stood they found a large deposit of Mesolithic worked flint. A short distance up river near Vespasian's Camp they found a massive concentration comprising over 30,000 pieces of worked flint dated between 8000BC–5000BC. This proves the area supported intensive Mesolithic hunting activities over a prolonged period. The chalklands landscape would have been quite open and provided good hunting on large herds of herbivores. There is no comparable site from the Mesolithic period. Without doubt this location was extremely special.

Mike explained that underlying the Avenue are very prominent elongated periglacial gullies, eroded by melt water at the end of the Ice Age, and they are naturally aligned to the solstice. The removal of the A344 road has helped confirm that they run for about 150m and are concentrated within natural banks. This alignment was used for the avenue as it approaches Stonehenge and Mike claims this is why the site was chosen.

Stonehenge lies on a chalk ridge that runs across Wessex. On this ridge lie a succession of important Neolithic monuments from Avebury, Marden Henge, Stonehenge, the Knowlton Circle to Mount Pleasant Henge. Was this area a watershed between two territories, and were the monuments used by the people to meet and enjoy what Mike called the three "F's", festival, feasting and fornication?

Durrington Walls is a henge with a diameter of 440 metres, and was excavated in 1967 by Geoff Wainwright and a horde of hard drinking diggers, who apparently were banned from every pub in the area. The Riverside Project returned to progress the work on this remarkable site. It is the largest Neolithic settlement in Europe, with the footprints of over 1000 dwellings, suggesting a population well in excess



of 4000 people. Amazingly the layout of the houses is exactly the same as those found on Skara Brae in the Orkney Islands, which are preserved in stone. Mike said there is evidence to suggest that a Neolithic culture spread from the Orkneys between 3600BC-3300BC, it includes the building of Cursus style monuments and the introduction of Grooved ware pottery. There is much feasting debris with many articulated bones (meaning that meat had been left on the bone when they were discarded), suggesting periods of conspicuous consumption. Isotope analysis of the cattle shows that they were not all local, but some had come from Aberdeenshire, South Wales and even Devon. Mike pointed out that long distance droving is not unusual and the trip from North Scotland would take just two months. It is evident that the site was used during the summer and during the winter, when more people attended possibly because they had time on their hands. There are no burials here.

Stonehenge is quite unique, it is the only building with shaped stones in Britain, but it is not actually a henge, having the ditch on the outside of the bank. It is orientated to the mid-summer sunrise and mid-winter sunset, as are the wood circles within Durrington Walls and Woodhenge itself. Mike emphasised that Stonehenge has undergone a succession of changes and mentioned five major stages in its development from 3000BC until it was abandoned in about 1600BC. The first stage was when the henge was built and a large circle of Welsh bluestones was erected in what later were named the Aubrey Holes. At around 2500BC the bluestones were rearranged and the sarsen stones introduced. This period between 3000BC and 2500BC, appears to be a time when Britain was isolated from the continent, and was when the 240 cremations found at Stonehenge were deposited. They comprise an equal number of men and women, but few children and few very few artefacts. It is the largest burial ground in the UK. The next period is the transition from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age and further work is needed to precisely date events, it coincides with the arrival of the Beaker people. They came from the Rhineland and beyond, they were able to work metal, possibly introduced alcohol and probably domesticated horses. They brought social changes

and new funerary practises, and they had no record of monumental structures. Very soon the settlement at Durrington Walls was closed by digging a henge ditch as was Bluestonehenge. By 2000BC the Bluestones had been re-arranged for the last time into a circle and horse shoe arrangement, the remnants of which we see today. From 2200BC round barrows were being built for funeral deposits and in the area over 1000 were constructed on either side of the Avon.

Mike is now working on a follow up project looking at the source of the stones. English Heritage has run a scanning programme and they confirmed that the Sarsen Stones weigh approximately 20 tons, and the Bluestones were calculated to weigh 2 tons, and 80 were brought from Wales. There are 43 Bluestones in place, 27 of them are of the characteristic spotted dolerite and a few are sedimentary. Mike has investigated two new sources for some of the stones, at Carn Geodog and the Craig Rhosyfelin quarry on the north of the Preseli Mynydd where due to the very specific geological signature and using petrochemical analysis they have found the exact cutting from which one of the Rhyolite stones was removed. Mike conjectures that some of the stones may well have been moved overland via the Brecon area and a short crossing of the Bristol Channel to enter the mouth of the Avon River. The larger Sarsen stones travelled from near Avebury, probably from the tops of the valleys where they eroded naturally out of the bedrock, rather than from within the valley where the stones appear degraded. The team found where the stones were dressed, just to the side of the Avenue near the Heel Stone.

Returning to his current work Mike said that he is trying to explain why Neolithic people were prepared to take on the massive challenge of transporting 80 two ton Bluestones from the Preseli Hills to the Wiltshire Plains. He will be investigating a site called Castell Mawr on the Nevern River in Pembrokeshire, where he hopes to locate the site of the original Welsh Stonehenge. We wish him every success.

The audience spontaneously applauded Mike after his talk and we had to curtail a barrage of questions to allow the caretaker to return home.

We thank Professor Mike Parker Pearson again for a wonderful talk and his colleague and friend Martin Green for helping to make this happen. I can recommend Professor Mike Parker Pearson's book "Solving the Mysteries of the Greatest Stone Age Monument".

**Andrew Morgan**

## **EDAS Archaeology Reports**

### **Mynchington Roman Villa**

Some members will remember the excavation of a Roman Villa at Mychen Farm between 1997-2001, which for a short period was invaded by Time Team and resulted in a programme. There has been an ongoing problem getting the excavation written up and published. Anyway we are delighted that we have received confirmation from Christopher Sparey-Green that he is now committed to complete the document by April 2014. We are in discussion with DNHAS regarding the best option for publication.

### **Moreton House**

We have recently been asked to look into the location of the original medieval Manor House at Moreton. A small team comprising Dave Stewart, Lilian Ladle and Andrew Morgan spent a very enjoyable half day with the owner looking at the possible site and looking round the existing Georgian Palladium style house built in 1733. They also met the owner's aunt who is the family archivist who showed them some old documents. Dave followed this up with two days in the field undertaking a magnetometry survey which did not show up any conclusive evidence. We will undertake some further historical research to try and reach a conclusion of what happened to the previous dwelling.

## EDAS Field Trip 2014 - Lincolnshire between 7 -13<sup>th</sup> June

Christmas is coming and it is time to get your diaries out and plan for next summer! If you want to avoid the stifling heat of the South coast, the influx of tourists or the inevitable disappointment of watching England go out of the World cup on penalties, then come to Lincolnshire with EDAS. Although the programme for the week is at an early stage of formulation I can promise a wealth of interesting visits led by knowledgeable guides (apart from me that is). We will see medieval castles, monastic sites, a smattering of Roman remains, mills, a very rare Templar site, and above all the glorious city of Lincoln.

If you have never been on an EDAS field trip before I would urge you to give it a try – just ask anyone who has been on one and find out what you have been missing! To find out more come and talk to me at the next meeting or email me on [brian.retired@ntlworld.com](mailto:brian.retired@ntlworld.com)

**Brian Maynard**

### Correction Notice

We thank Peter Lightfoot for pointing out an error made in the article about his talk on watermills in the November Newsletter.

“Regarding the paragraph relating to Bourton, the Bourton wheel, which was the second largest in the country at 60 ft diameter, was built in 1837. It was dismantled in 1916 for WW1 munitions that were being made in the adjacent engineering works of the time. The Castleton wheel was built in 1869 and is 26ft in diameter was used for pumping water to Sherborne. It became very badly corroded and was recently reconstructed by a company at Henstridge and now replaces the original at the Sherborne Steam & Waterwheel Centre at Osborne near the original Sherborne Castle.”

**Andrew Morgan**

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DATE	EDAS EVENTS – 2013
11th December 2013	EDAS Lecture – Isaac Gulliver Dorset Smuggler, with Malcolm Angel
DATE	EDAS EVENTS – 2014
8th January 2014	EDAS Lecture –Pre-Columbian Mayan Culture, with Neil Meldrum, EDAS Member
12th February 2014	EDAS Lecture – Burial Mounds and Battletanks, Archaeology of MOD estates, with Martin Brown
12th March 2014	EDAS AGM and Lecture – Hod Hill, with Dave Stewart, EDAS Member
9th April 2014	EDAS Lecture – Egyptians and other Travelling People in Early Modern Dorset, with Judy Ford
14th May 2014	EDAS Lecture – Kingston Lacy, an undiscovered history, with David Smith, National Trust

## EDAS 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Essays

*Since this month's essays will be the last in the series I have asked the contributors to consider the future. I am delighted that Nancy Grace an archaeologist working for the National Trust and a dear friend of the society, and Jon Murden the Director of the Dorset County Museum, who have provided some thoughts on the future and some challenges facing amateur societies.*

### **The Future of the Past, by Nancy Grace**

As the National Trust is a charity with very few full time staff, to do all we need to do, volunteers and relationships with local groups from all aspects of the historic environment are a vital life line. Over many years, members of EDAS have given us their time, knowledge and experience for which I thank you all. My first memory of working with members of EDAS was in 1988 at Crab Farm, mainly lots of laughter and of many buckets emptied; the ditches were deep! It's great to work with a group that is so keen and happy to research sites, dig holes, wash pot, help at events and chew the cud over a slice of cake and a mug of tea.

Martin has already written about the National Trust and our links with EDAS, so Andrew asked me to think about the future (something that doesn't come naturally to archaeologists!) of local societies and what might change looking in from the professional side. So here is a personal view from the edge of the trench.

The future of archaeology lies in the hands of us all. The current financial and legislative pressures on jobs, planning regulation, council departments, charities like the National Trust and even government departments (EH) can make the future seem bleak. But I am optimistic that archaeology can survive and still be relevant and have meaning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the Trust we have embraced the digital world and now have a blog which connects with people not just in the UK but with people across the world. We may not be keen on technology unless it's a bit of 'geophiz' but in order to make our voices heard and to give access to all the amazing stories we uncover we have to embrace the technological age!

We still need to keep our feet on the ground and connect face to face and groups like EDAS are vital for this. Societies are the link between us all in the archaeological world from the academic to the interested individual. When people ask me how to get into archaeology I always suggest they join their local society or club. By volunteering time, holding meetings and getting us all out and about to share what we do through talks and open days we keep the community together.

There are challenges. Increasingly, people need to work past retirement age, or both parents have to work and have less time to encourage and inspire the youngsters. In order to counter all the cut backs in peoples' time and funds, groups like EDAS may have to join ranks with others to pool resources, perhaps work jointly with the Young Archaeologist Clubs in the area, or hold joint lectures/talks with the University archaeology club. The future of the past will be passed from generation to generation and those of us with experience and wise words need to hold out a hand to those coming up the hill behind us. So keep up the good work, keep doing what you have been doing for another 30 years. Archaeology needs you, we need you!

Nancy Grace

Archaeologist  
National Trust

Please note Jon Murden's article will be published in the next newsletter.