



Established 1983

## East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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### NEWSLETTER – November 2014

#### EDAS Lecture – Cage Chantries of Christchurch Priory, with Dr Cindy Wood, Winchester University

This was a quintessential EDAS lecture, a subject that some, me included, may have considered a little rarefied, maybe too specialised and a little dry. In fact it turned out to be a delightful, thought provoking evening; a reflection on the medieval mind and faith. At the end there were a number of insightful questions from the members. Cindy is a historian/archaeologist and she gained her doctorate on the subject of 'Caged Chantries and their role in late medieval religion'.

Cindy explained that a chantry is effectively a trust fund established for the purpose of employing one or more priests to perform a stipulated number of masses; an intercession to God, for the spiritual benefit of a deceased person. There are different types of chantry; it may be temporary when a sum of money is donated for a set number of masses, or permanent such as when a piece of land is donated to provide continual income. The masses could be performed at an altar or within a designated chapel built for the purpose.

She reminded us that the core challenge within Christian belief is what happens after death when a person undergoes judgment, and the soul's eternal destiny is decided. Few people believed that their lives were so pure that they pass directly to Heaven and would be eternally united with the Almighty. Most hoped they would not be cast immediately down into Hell, and they would achieve the state of Purgatory where, over time, souls can be purified and achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of Heaven.

These complex rites of death were best explained to the illiterate, non-Latin speaking congregations by brilliant cartoon-like Doom paintings, such as shown on the nave arch at St Thomas and St Edmund, Salisbury. A **Doom** is a traditional English term for a painting or other image of the Last Judgment when Christ judges souls to send them to Heaven or Hell.



*C15th Doom Painting from St Thomas and St Edmund Church Salisbury*

It was painted around 1475 as an offering for a safely returned pilgrim. The painting was white-washed over at the Reformation and remained forgotten until the 19th century when it was rediscovered and restored. It nicely demonstrates that status is no guarantee of holiness, showing ordinary citizens entering heaven whilst many bearers of mitres and crowns are flung, with some satisfaction, into the place below.

By the 14th century there were thousands of chantries in churches throughout the country. Caged Chantries are specific to England they are enclosed within the mother church. Only 55 remain, of which three are located within Christchurch Priory.

They became increasingly popular during the period of the Black Death. By 1355, Christchurch Priory had up to fourteen altars and fifteen chantries. There were 23 canons (secular priests) who would faithfully perform the masses. Surprisingly Cindy was of the opinion that these masses were not seen as a business opportunity but a rather a divine duty. She admitted that through her research she had become less cynical of the practise and recognised that they were a demanding overhead for the church, rather than just an entrepreneurial scam, as I had thought.

In Christchurch Priory there are three impressive chantry chapels, where priests prayed for the souls of the deceased. These were the last internal additions to the Priory before it was dissolved in 1539.

The earliest is the Berkeley chantry, which has remnants of original wall paintings and large red and white roses of Lancaster and York on the ceiling. There appears to be some uncertainty about the exact origins but it was built about 1486 towards the end of the Wars of the Roses. William Berkeley worked for Edward IV but rose against Richard III and joined Henry Tudor. The chantry was founded for his parents and dedicated to St John and the Blessed Mary. It is poorly painted but is very atmospheric and has a stone screen and squints to provide visibility to the high altar. It also has a piscina into which unused holy waters are poured and returned to earth.



*Berkeley Chantry piscina*



*Harys Chantry*

Robert Harys was a canon appointed vicar of Christchurch; he must have had reasonable finances because he built the Harys Chantry which was erected in 1525. Again this is in a prime position and backs onto the Great Quire.

The most imposing chantry is that built for the Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury in 1529, who was patron to the church. Built in brilliant white Caen stone, to a design by the Florentine sculptor, Pietro Torrigiano it exhibits stunning fan vaulting. It was her intention that she and her son should be buried there. However, Reginald went to Rome to become a priest and whilst there railed against Henry VIII for his proposed breach with the Pope. Henry retaliated and prosecuted the 69-year-old mother for treason, although she had once been a favourite of his and he had given her the manor of Christchurch. Maybe he recognised her as a threat because she had a direct claim to the throne, as the last of the Plantagenets. She and the rest of her family were executed in 1554; she refused to kneel and it took several swipes of the executioner's blade before her head was removed. Her son fared much better, and under Queen Mary he became Archbishop of Canterbury, where he was eventually buried. Hence the chantry was not used. Henry VIII ordered that the arms, badges and inscriptions should be defaced in the chantry. Nothing else was damaged and the defiled bosses remain testament to her faith.



*Salisbury Chantry – fan vaulting with defaced bosses*



*Christ ascends with a little help from his friends*

On the outside of the chantry facing the quire is a delightful, unexpectedly humorous sculpture, looking up the gown of Christ as he ascends into heaven; pulled by a bevy of angels. Note that the feet have been broken off.

When Henry VIII initiated the Reformation in England, Parliament passed an Act in 1545 concluding that chantries represented misapplied funds and misappropriated lands. The Act stated that all chantries and their properties would belong to the King for as long as he should live. Along with the dispersal of the monasteries, the Act was designed to help cover the cost of the war with France. Because Henry did not live long after the Act was passed, few chantries were closed or given over to him. His successor, Edward VI, had a new Act passed in 1547, which completely suppressed 2,374 chantries and guild chapels; it also authorized inquiries to determine all of their possessions. Although the act called for the money to go to charitable ends and the public good, most of it appears to have gone to Edward VI's advisers. The Crown sold many chantries to private citizens. Sensitive to any detrimental repercussions, the Act provided that the Crown guarantee a pension to all chantry priests displaced by its implementation. Henry had intended to demolish the church, but in

response to a plea from the townspeople, he granted it, to the churchwardens and inhabitants of Christchurch to be used as the parish church.

Cindy explained that, because admittance to Heaven is only possible through the intervention of Christ, the ever practical Church introduced the state of Limbo of the Patriarchs where the patriarchs of the Old Testament were believed to be kept until Christ was available to lead them to their rightful place in Heaven. And they defined a state of Limbo of the Innocents to cater for infants who died too young to have been baptized and freed from the original sin which accompanies everyone born of a woman! In 2007 Pope Benedict XIV, declared that the state of limbo has been dropped, stating that it was only a theological hypothesis and never a defined truth of faith, but to the disappointment of many he failed to remove Purgatory.

**Andrew Morgan**

### MINCHINGTON ROMAN VILLA REPORT

I am pleased/relieved to advise that Christopher Sparey-Green is making progress on the report of the Minchington Farm Roman Villa that was excavated between 1997-2003. He has submitted a report structure to EDAS and DNHAS for approval and he intends to complete the report by April 2015.

We have held discussions with Jon Murden and Paul Lashmar regarding publication options. I expect that it will be included in the 2016 proceedings.

### UPDATE: Archaeological Evaluation of Walford Farm, north of Wimborne

A small number of EDAS members and members of the Colehill Parish council took advantage of an invitation made by John Trehy Associate Director/Archaeologist of Bloors Homes, to visit the archaeological evaluation undertaken by Bournemouth Archaeology, Bournemouth University's commercial archaeology unit. Their land covers 43 hectares of which 35 have been earmarked for development. Working under the guidance of Steve Wallis, County Archaeologist, and from detailed study of the geophysical survey they opened 45 evaluation trenches across the site, and based on what they found they identified three areas where they cleared the top soil for detailed evaluation.



*Walford Farm Development Area straddling Cranborne Road*



*Group near Bronze Age post holes*

Jonny Monteith, the Bournemouth Archaeology site manager, took our party round the site, which is covered in a deep layer of clay and was very slippery after recent weather. The visit was restricted to the area on the east of Cranborne Road, where they had found a Bronze Age enclosure (marked BA on aerial photograph) containing the post holes of two, possibly three round houses. The location was well chosen and prestigious, being the highest point on the site, offering splendid views across Wimborne and the valleys of the River Stour and River Allen.

The first round house is large, being 15 metres in diameter. Both exhibit a grand entrance with four post holes, facing towards the east. No bones have survived the acidic soil conditions, but there are pot sherds tempered with shell, as well as flint artefacts. No hearths have yet been found. The work is difficult in the clay, rock hard in the dry and water logged and slippery in the wet.



Across the field further to the east of the site Jonathen pointed out an area where they had found two fine Neolithic flint axes deposited together at the top of a small pit, which also contained Neolithic sherds. A third area contained medieval material.



*Bronze Age Sherds*

The area to the west of Cranborne Road has yet to be opened up and will be considered in a later phase of the work.

The team will complete the field work, then focus on the post excavation work and write their report. They expect to have a watching brief as and when the developers start the building work.



We thanked Jonathen and his team for giving us the opportunity to visit the site.

**Andrew Morgan**

## **GREAT DORSET ARCHAEOLOGY & MYSTERIES QUIZ**

EDAS and the Priest House Museum are jointly organising a fun quiz night, to be held on

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2015 starting at 7.30pm at the Priest House Museum.**

Test your knowledge about Dorset, from the depths of prehistory to the modern era. Even if you can't answer a question you will be pleased with the learning opportunity.

There will be ten rounds of questions, with a break for light refreshments.

The charge is £30 per team, which can be up to six people, the price includes the refreshments.

Tickets will be on sale from the Wimborne Tourist Information Office, next to the Priest House Museum, or can be arranged through Bryan Popple or Andrew Morgan.

***Proceeds will be shared between the PHM and EDAS***

### *ALICE's Adventures in the Kingdom of Kush*

Members who worked on the Druce Farm excavation may remember Alice Jones, who spent time working with us during the summer. I am pleased to say that she has been accepted to participate on an exciting archaeological excavation within the pharaonic and Kushite town and cemetery at Kawa in northern Sudan. The project is managed by the British Museum in partnership with the Sudan Archaeological Research Society. She will be there for two months and she has promised to send us a report about her experiences.

I just wonder whether they are looking for a team of experienced excavators who are available this winter??

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>EDAS EVENTS – 2014</b>
12th November 2014	EDAS Lecture – The Roman Army, Fact or Fiction, with John Smith
10th December 2014	EDAS Lecture – Saxon Wimborne and East Dorset, with Janet Seal
<b>DATE</b>	<b>EDAS EVENTS – 2015</b>
14 <sup>th</sup> January 2015	EDAS Lecture – Geomantics in Archaeology with Ben Urmston, Wessex Archaeology
11th February 2015	EDAS Lecture – The Protected Wrecks on the South Coast, with Mark Beattie-Edwards, Programme Director Nautical Archaeology Society
13th February 2015	Great Dorset Archaeology and Mystery Quiz – 7.30 pm Priest House Museum, Wimborne. £30 per team of 6, for more details ask Bryan Popple or Andrew Morgan
11 <sup>th</sup> March 2015	EDAS Lecture – Life & Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum, with Paul Roberts Curator British Museum. <b>To be held at the Marconi Lecture Theatre, Bournemouth University</b>
25th March 2015	EDAS AGM followed by members' evening
8th April 2015	EDAS Lecture – Catalhoyuk Neolithic Settlement, with Professor Peter Andrews, Curator of Blandford Museum
13th May 2015	EDAS Lecture – The Portable Antiquaries Scheme and the Treasure Act, with Ciorstaidh Hayward Trevarthen, Dorset Finds Officer
13th to 20 <sup>th</sup> June 2015	EDAS Field Trip – Cambridgeshire area. Led by Keith and Denise Allsop. Details to follow.

**Note:** unless otherwise stated all lectures start at 7.30pm and are held at **St Catherine's Church Hall, Lewens Lane, Wimborne, BH21 1LE.**