



Established 1983

East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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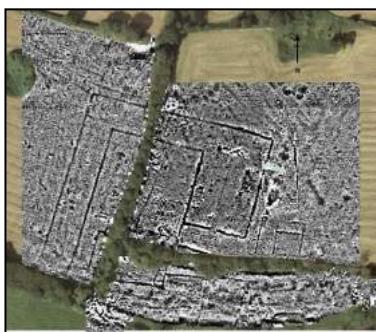
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NEWSLETTER – MIDSUMMER 2016

EDAS MAY LECTURE: *Druce Farm - the rise and fall of a unique Roman residence* by Lilian Ladle

Lilian is, of course, well known to us as our Director of Field Archaeology, and stepped in at a fairly late stage when our planned speaker cancelled. Andrew said he thought that Lilian's presentation would prove more lively and interesting and, of course, it did.

Druce Farm, owned by Mrs. Ann Ridout, is first mentioned as Drewes/Drogo in 1431 and was 'Little Wetherby Farm' in Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Thanks to member Stuart Crane we have some good aerial photos of the villa site in Lower Limepits Field, with the Piddle running below it and Waterston Manor just out of shot. Dr. Ken Wheatley (ex-EDAS) and the Stour Valley Detectorists were instrumental in finding the site, confirmed by field-walking finds in 2011 and subsequent magnetometry showing huge ditches and probable buildings.



Trial trenches in Autumn 2012 confirmed the remains of walls quite close to the surface, and more extensive magnetometry from Dave Stewart showed the ditches going well beyond the villa site. The 2013 excavation aimed to gauge the state of preservation, which we'd expected to be poor but was actually fairly good. Ann Ridout was excited and very supportive (and got more so as work progressed!). 2014's excavation aimed to examine the extent of the 3 ranges, put the villa in its landscape context and engage the general public. These aims continued into 2015, bolstered by the earlier views of experts like Sir Barry Cunliffe and several from the Association for Roman Archaeology (ARA), that excavations should continue.

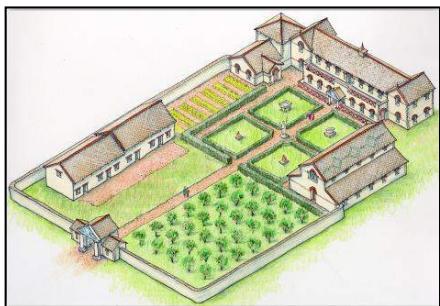
- Stylish detached residence on a hillside overlooking the River Piddle
- Large rooms with magnificent mosaics
- Aisled hall and workshops
- Access to a good road
- Extended and refurbished to suit the latest fashions

Public engagement is important in itself, but also part of the very necessary fund-raising effort. It has included many school visits, with 250 children learning about the site and having a chance to dig, and well-attended Open Days. We lost count on the last Open Day after 850, testament to the publicity from many sources, including Vanessa Joseph's advert (partly shown) for the Priest's House Museum and, especially, the visits from BBC South Today in 2014 and 2015.

Lilian thanked the many volunteers, excavators and others, without whom the dig wouldn't have been possible. Robert Heaton's digger proved to be a vital piece of equipment in moving soil exactly as needed, and he 'just happened to have' a cherry picker to get aerial views and photos. We've also had lots of support from many others in the archaeological



community, such as those mentioned above, Messrs. Neal & Cosh (THE mosaic experts), Luigi Thompson (who painted the mosaic) and Malcolm Lyne (ceramics and coin expert). A free 3D laser scan from a construction services company, SIAD, and reconstruction drawings from one of Lilian's neighbours were amongst the valuable support received from many other people. This has truly been a community venture.



What all this has revealed is a courtyard villa of 3 ranges within a boundary ditch: the main domestic range at the north, workshops to the west and an aisled building to the east which probably had several functions. Evidence seems to show occupation and activity of some form from the later 1st century through to the 5th, after the Romans 'left', and perhaps even into the 6th century. At its height in the mid-4th century it may well have looked something like the reconstruction here.

The West Range of 4 rooms, with an earlier phase and a build-up of beaten chalk floors, shows clear evidence of workshop use, though not of farming (no farm implements have yet been identified from anywhere on the site). Rubble over part of the building was a wall collapse, over limestone roof tiles, showing that it was a solidly constructed building. A well-built enormous oven is probably from the first phase, but there's also an iron working furnace and another circular one that, despite Vanessa's efforts, proved not to be a well. It seems that much of the iron used in the complex was actually made here. The building also had a clear doorway, one of only 2 certain ones found.



The East Range was an aisled building, the basic design followed by churches with a 'nave' flanked by pillars and side aisles. This developed from an early, slightly smaller, building to an aisled one which was then extended, perhaps after a fire. It shows evidence of post-Roman use. The latest roof, at least, appears to have been patterned with limestone tiles and also slates, perhaps from Delabole in Cornwall, found under the collapsed north gable wall. The very heavy roof was held up by wooden beams set on large stone plinths, originally 6 but 8 after the extension. Only one of these survived later robbing but it is unusual, perhaps unique, in having a central inset, 1 Roman foot square, showing just how huge the beams must have been.



Amongst the other evidence, a square 'plunge pool' from the first aisled hall, later filled, shows this was a high status building. A large domestic oven was built around 330, whilst just at the edge of the building was a large cess pit, and several other intercutting pits (there was no waste collection in Roman times!). Although these buildings are well known in Hampshire and Wiltshire, this is only the second known in Dorset. They were often barns, though there's no evidence of that here, and it could well have been an administrative centre and also provided accommodation.

The North Range was, at its height, a large house with 9 rooms and 2 corridors as well as evidence for a 2nd storey. The early ceramic roof tiles show makers marks and may have military connections. They seem to have been replaced later with limestone, yet another sign of wealth and status as, of course, were the many rooms with mosaics (mostly plough damaged) and painted wall plaster. One room had a second mosaic laid over an earlier one, whilst many had fillet: Roman 'skirting board' to produce a neat join at floor level. "Andrew's room", excavated carefully to a considerable depth over a long period, produced key evidence of phasing and of the earlier walls, not to mention 3 infant burials and the sole of a shoe. Amongst the re-used tile cut up for mosaics were many pieces of flue tiles, but we've not found the hypocaust they presumably came from.



The swastika mosaic, symbol of good fortune from at least the Indus Valley civilisation c.3,000BC, was found 21st May 2015 and uncovered on the advice of ARA. The experts say it was laid about AD 350. The detailed photographs needed for it to be painted, tessera by tessera, involved a very early start on a hot summer day, and constant watering to maintain the colours. This was the reception room of the owner, who probably lounged on a couch with iron legs; the largest repaired section of mosaic seems to be from the damage of moving such a heavy piece of furniture. The crudity of many of the repairs suggest that they took place as Roman civilisation withered, probably into the 5th century.



As elsewhere, the roof tiles had fallen onto the mosaic as the building decayed, but there were thousands of tiny bones under them – particularly water vole bones in pellets dropped by barn owls roosting in the rafters. Expensive carbon dating of 3 bones produced no result on one and dates around 310 and 360 for the other two. Yet the owls imply the building stood for some time after it went out of use, and there is late pottery and a coin of the House of Theodosius (388-395) from that room. So what should we believe?



There are, of course, large numbers of finds, including about 4,000 nails and around 2,500 other pieces of iron. A high proportion came from the ditches around the site, clearly used as rubbish dumps. Other than such building material as survived the decay and robbing of the buildings, none of the finds are complete, in itself a valuable observation, but incomplete items still provide valuable information about dating, status, activity, etc., although much remains to be fully identified.

As well as the slates and Purbeck stone, there is yellow limestone and blue lias from Somerset. The bright blue pigment on some of the wall plaster could well be lapis lazuli from Afghanistan, whilst some of the pottery came from Germany and the samian ware from Gaul. The earliest pottery dates from AD 60-70, whilst we also have some late Roman South-East Dorset Orange Wiped Ware produced from 370 to at least 420. Fragments of an amphora for eastern Mediterranean wine dating to c.550 are the furthest east this pottery has been found in Britain. A pair of nave hoops and rings, from the end of an axle, show how these may have been transported, with related evidence including parts of horseshoes.

Shale vessels have been found, bone spoon bowls and parts of stone mortars and pestles, as well as several fragments of quern stones showing that flour was being produced. The huge number of bones, many with butchery marks, show what was

being eaten here, including sea fish as indicators of high status.

Several artefacts connected with both leather- and wool-working have also been found, whilst the bone-handled folding pocket knife may well have been for cutting thread. The many glass fragments include an important and very rare shard of snake-thread glass from the latter half of the 2nd century; a very high status article. Personal ornaments included bronze and bone hairpins, rings, bracelets and a single earring. Enigmatic graffiti on a sherd of pottery shows the inhabitants were literate, confirmed by several pieces of stylus, and only administrators used the seal for which we have the bottom of its box. There's even possible evidence of Christianity on what might be a Chi-Rho monogramme on a bronze 'drawing pin'.



Worked flint shows prehistoric activity on the site, with the latest evidence from things like a buckle of c.550 and a tiny silver lace ring dating 550-600. Between these we have coins covering most of the Roman period in Britain, from one of Vespasian (AD 76) to others of the Houses of Valentinian and Theodosius in the late 4th/early 5th century.

So what did we do, after all our efforts and those of the wider community had added a new and, in some ways, unique Roman villa to Dorset? Sadly, we covered it up again – but that's the only way we could preserve what's there. But that's not the end of the story, quite apart from the large ongoing effort to identify the finds, interpret the site and publish it. Thanks again to Dave Stewart, we now have a greatly extended magnetometry survey showing further possible features and the huge, early, ditch, whose clear alignments seem to show it was properly surveyed - usually the province of the military. This gives the basis for short excavations in the landscape away from the building ranges.



And it also adds to Lilian's latest interpretation of the villa, consistent with all the evidence we have but, of course, subject to what is still to be learnt from full identification of all the finds. This could well be the official residence of a senior imperial administrator, likely the procurator from Dorchester - itself starting up at the same time as the villa's initial occupation. Reinforcing this is the probable military involvement in design, and perhaps construction, but no sign of a military presence. The fact that it had relatively small changes on the whole, unlike the wholesale re-building of many private villas, could mean it was owned by the State, whilst the lack of complete personal items suggests regularly changing occupants who took away their own possessions. Watch this space!

Many thanks to Lilian for stepping in with such an interesting presentation. This volunteer, at least, learnt several new things.

Geoff Taylor

Druce Farm Roman Villa

This year we will be returning to evaluate the landscape surrounding the site of the Roman Villa, which was covered at the end of last year. We will be investigating an area in the south east of the same field where Dave Stewart's geophysical survey showed several interesting anomalies and where we started to uncover two walls of a potential building. We will also be investigating enclosure ditches in this area.

The site is being prepared for the season, which will start on Monday 4th July and is expected to continue for 6 – 8 weeks. Normally we will work Monday to Friday but there may be the possibility of some weekend working if there is sufficient interest.

If you are interested then please contact: Site Director Lilian Ladle email: lilianladle@hotmail.com or tel: 01929 553144

2017 FIELD TRIP – Hadrian's Wall

We have a reserve list, so Lilian will be contacting everybody to confirm their attendance and then she will finalise the accommodation requirements with the Beaumont Hotel, Hexham.

Further details from Lilian lilianladle@hotmail.com or tel: 01929 553144

2018 FIELD TRIP – South East Wales

Preliminary discussions have started regarding a possible field trip in 2018 to South East/Mid Wales. Exploring the land of the Silures the Celtic tribe mentioned by Ptolemy, the geographer from Alexandria. Caerleon, Caerwent, Llantony Abbey, Offa's Dyke and as many prehistoric sites as possible may well feature. If you have any thoughts about this area please contact Geoff Taylor or Andrew Morgan.

In Search of Londinium by David Hall

My passion for Romano British History was not particularly well served during my years of working in and around London. The Crofton site at Orpington is the only villa site open to the public in Greater London, and of course there is the fantastic London Amphitheatre at The Guildhall Art gallery which is also open to visitors, and where so important this discovery became, the plans of the new guildhall building were changed to provide public access to the in-situ site.

There are tantalising glimpses of roman city wall notably around Tower Hill underground station where I served a short attachment with Museum of London Archaeology understanding the lower dimensions of the section off Vine Street, and Londoners are well served with great displays both in the British Museum and the MOL, but it's not the same as being in the ground! However if you "dig" deeper there are places in private ownership where permission can be sought to view and a few years back I set myself a challenge to try and find them all.

There are two churches with mosaics, stone walls and floors in the undercroft, (All Hallows on the wall, Lower Thames street, and St Brides church lower end of fleet street) an NPC car park(west side of noble street and south of the MOL) below London wall with remains of the forts west gate with limited access at certain times of the year,(also in the same car park adjacent to bays 57 and 58 is a fine section of wall) the billingsgate bathhouse(Lower Thames Street) in the basement of an insurance company tower block now controlled by MOLA as key holders with restricted access . In the cellar of an upmarket ladies hairdresser (corner of Gracechurch & Leadenhall Market) near Moorgate is a surprisingly fine example of the wall with some original stone facings.

Banks can be more challenging! When I first approached Merrill Lynch/ Bank of America (2 King Edward Street EC1A 1HQ) who have a section of wall and bastion beneath the building I was given short shrift. Writing to them didn't help either, particularly as I appeared to upset them by pointing out that they were merely custodians of London's Roman history! MOLA suggested contacting the head of security where I was eventually given just one date and told to present myself with my passport in the morning and return in the afternoon where I finally got to view. It was certainly well worth it. No photography was allowed.

My latest target was the Bank of England (Threadneedle Street EC2R 8AH). There are two mosaics displayed in the British Museum uncovered in the 1926 to 1939 rebuilding of the bank, but by far the best is the one at the bottom of a fine cantilevered staircase within the bank. Before the IRA bombed the City of London you could walk quite freely within the lower bounds as you can in any high street bank. It took a long time for BOE open days to be resumed. Then in more recent times with much heightened security this part of the bank is now off limits.

Two emails sent were met with polite rebuttals but then I picked up on a media interview given by Mark Carney, Governor of the bank who amongst other things stated how: "he envied London's 2000 years of history lying below his feet compared to his home country of Canada" I put this in a glowing letter addressed to the Governor's Office. After a month's wait I received a telephone call inviting me to visit. Thorough background checks were required but on May 5th I was finally allowed to view it and even allowed to take pictures (with a stern security guard hanging over my shoulder). Whilst looking a tad over preserved and highly polished it was fantastic to see it close up and was far superior in design to the other two examples.



Am I finished? I thought so until my friends at the MOL told me about the new Bloomsberg media building going up opposite Cannon Street station. The current excavation there has been termed London's Pompeii. This was the site where back in 1954 the Temple of Mithras was uncovered. The marbles, busts, writing tablets and other fine artefacts are on display in the MOL. In 2017 in a deal with Bloomsberg they are to be returned to the original site and given public access. Watch this space!

David Hall

East Dorset Archaeology Planning Group (EDAPG)

The pilot project has been completed and agreed to be a qualified success.

Between 1st May 2015 and 1st April 206 the team assessed 941 planning applications and made a recommendation regarding potential archaeology on 99 of them (10.6%).

Towards the end of the pilot East Dorset District Council (EDDC) merged with Christchurch and migrated onto their planning system. This has caused significant problems to our team, as well as EDDC. Subject to the resolution of these problems the team has agreed in principle to move into a live mode as from September.

During the summer, with the support of Professor Tim Darvill, meetings will be held with EDDC planning department about the end to end process and the role of EDAPG. The team intend to continue its programme to contact all the East Dorset Parish and Town Council planning committees and raise their awareness about their local archaeology. Dorset Archaeology Committee have asked for a presentation and Historic England have inquired about the project.

The immediate challenge is to find more volunteers. Training will be given and with a little experience assessment of the weekly list of planning applications normally takes between 2-3 hours.

If interested then please contact Ian Richardson: email [windowdiver22@gmail.com](mailto>windowdiver22@gmail.com)

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Note: this is where EDAS worked on a Roman Villa excavation between 1996-2001 and where TimeTeam visited in 2003.
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WHY DOES LEN BRING A CARRIER BAG TO EDAS MEETINGS?

You may have noticed a surreptitious hand-over of a carrier bag from Len to Vanessa at many EDAS meetings. This is because Len collects the tops of plastic milk bottles for the Priest's House Museum in Wimborne. These are sent to the GHS Recycling Centre in Portsmouth which pays the Museum £30 per 500 kgs – approximately 100 black bin bags full. The bottle tops are used to make hard plastic toys for children, such as slides and other garden toys. They also go to make more bottle tops!

If you would like to join Len in raising a bit of money for the Museum – we have recently heard that our main grant from East Dorset County Council will probably be cut by 50% – please start by checking your milk bottle tops as only bottle tops with the correct markings are suitable.

Each top donated must have the recycle logo on the inside and contain the number **2, 02 or 4**. It is not a case of any plastic cap or bottle top, or even the screw tops of jars.

Only milk bottle tops are acceptable; the colour is not important.

I'm generally at EDAS meetings but if not, we have other Museum volunteers amongst the EDAS members who would be happy to take your milk bottle tops.

Vanessa Joseph

EDAS PROGRAMME 2016-2017

Date	Speaker/Leader	Title
Wed 14 Sep 2016	Zoe Barras, A to Z Archaeology	100 Ways to Die: the diseases and disfigurements of ancient times
Sun 9th Oct 2016	David Reeve	EDAS Walk: Rediscovering Wimborne's Saxon Foundation: a walk around the Town's early boundaries
Wed 12 Oct 2016	Dr. Miles Russell, Bournemouth University	Finding Duropolis: a new type of Iron Age settlement for Dorset
Wed 9 Nov 2016	Richard Osgood, Operation Nightingale	The Archaeology of World War I
Wed 14 Dec 2016	Lawrence Shaw, New Forest National Park Authority	Shedding light on the New Forest's history: the results of LIDAR and other surveys
Wed 11 Jan 2017	Prof. Peter Andrews, Natural History Museum & Blandford Museum	An ape's view of human evolution: our fossil ape relatives and how they lived
Wed 8 Feb 2017 at the University	Prof. Tim Darvill, Bournemouth University	A tomb with a view: new investigations on Cotswold-Severn long barrows
Wed 8 Mar 2017	AGM	Members' Evening
Wed 5 Apr 2017 - NOT 2nd Wednesday	Martin Papworth, National Trust	The late great Medieval manor house of Kingston Lacy
Wed 10 May 2017	Kris Strutt, University of Southampton	Atomic magnetism, current & dielectric permittivity: how Physics has the potential to transform Archaeology: new discoveries from geophysics at Old Sarum and other sites

Note: unless otherwise stated all lectures are from 7.30 – 9.30 pm and are held at **St Catherine's Church Hall, Lewens Lane, Wimborne, BH21 1LE.**

[**http://www.dorset-archaeology.org.uk/**](http://www.dorset-archaeology.org.uk/)