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East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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MIDSUMMER NEWSLETTER – July 2022

Editor's Notes

Hello to everyone, and I hope that you're all enjoying this lovely (if rather hot) weather.

Andrew has provided some excellent news about the Druce Roman villa monograph's progress towards publication, expected in the autumn, thanks in particular to Lilian's herculean efforts: ***The Rise and Decline of Druce Farm Roman Villa (60-650 CE)***.

As summarised below, the May lecture on **The Vale of Pewsey Project** was held on *Zoom* as the speaker lives on the North Yorkshire moors. Thankfully, the possible internet problems from that area didn't happen, and we had 55 connections for the lecture – probably 65 or more people – on a project that covered the whole of the story of Neolithic Britain.

Jim Stacey sent me an article from the magazine of the Classical Association, which I've summarised under its original title: **Voices from Roman Britain**. In a sense it's a follow-up to the now-completed series 'Remembering the Romans', in that it deals with Roman inscriptions – but epigraphs here rather than the epitaphs in the series.

I am, as always, grateful to Alan for his contributions to the newsletter, here the fourth of his follow-ups to Leonard Baker's lecture on the history of Cranborne Chase: **'The Most Riotous, Unprincipled Men' – The Main Characters, Part 2**; following that are the umpteenth editions of Alan's **Weblinks** and the **Weblink Highlights**.

In January I included an article on the Viking Ship Museum in Denmark, and mentioned the reconstructed longship that was sailed to Dublin and back. I've now found space to include the first of two further articles on this, covering the reconstruction: ***Havingsten fra Glendalough (Sea Stallion from Glendalough)***. When I can find space again there will be an article on the Sea Stallion's voyage.

Finally, before the **EDAS Programme** and **District Diary**, there's information on a number of Events and activities over the summer – **some are very soon so I suggest look at them as soon as you can**.

Geoff Taylor

The Rise and Decline of Druce Farm Roman Villa (60-650 CE): Excavations 2012-2018

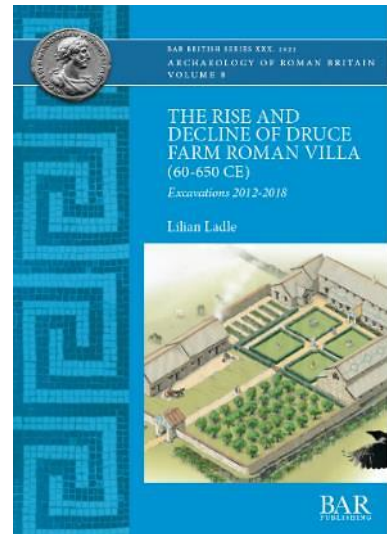
We are thrilled to inform you that the Druce Farm Roman Villa Monograph is nearing completion. Following outstanding peer reviews by three leading academics, BAR Publishing have accepted the document in its entirety. They are fast-tracking the volume in their British Archaeological Reports British Series (Archaeology of Roman Britain), with publication expected in the autumn.

The book has been written and compiled by Lilian with contributions from a number of subject experts, including some EDAS members. There have been important contributions from other members and friends, including Lilian's husband Mike, who has been fully engaged supporting Lilian 24/7 and making endless adjustments to the illustrations and photographs, Janet Bartlet who prepared hundreds of illustrations, Carole O'Hara for her plans and drawings and Geoff Taylor, who has been thorough and meticulous when copy editing the text, tables and figures, a task very few could accomplish. This has been a herculean task that has been fully recognised by the three academic peer reviewers who were unanimous in their praise:

'This is an exceptional piece of work, published in very good time, demonstrating the quality of research and post excavation work that a team of non-professional archaeologists are able to generate'

'Since the number of villas excavated and published to this high standard are very few, it is a contribution of considerable significance.'

'This report is one of the building blocks for the study of Roman Britain. It sets high standards for others to follow.'



Launch Conference: We are arranging a half day event to launch the book. It will likely be held at Bournemouth University on a Saturday afternoon towards the end of October.

Discounted Purchase: BAR Publishing have yet to finalise the price, but they have offered EDAS a 35% reduction for advance sales (**Note:** it is a large book and will be priced accordingly).

Details of the conference and how to pre-order the book will be made available as soon as possible.

A big thank you to everyone who has been involved with the project; it would not have been possible without your contributions. It seems a long time ago since we first walked a field at Druce Farm, on a cold November day in 2011, and discovered a large quantity of Roman building material exposed in the ploughed soil; little did we know.....

Andrew Morgan

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Correction and apology – Wimborne All Hallows

In my article on the All Hallows excavation in the April newsletter, I was mortified to realise I had referred to our medieval cross slab experts as Moira and Bruce Gittos. Their names are, in fact, Moira and Brian Gittos.

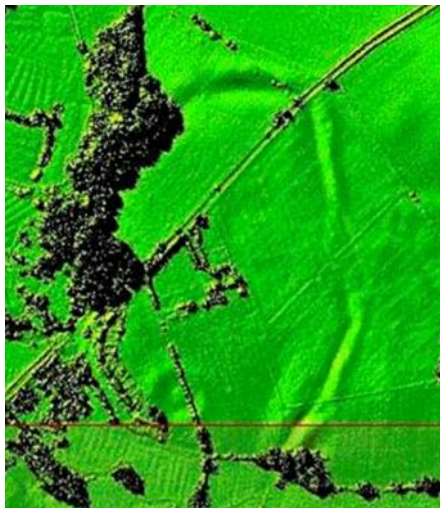
They did see the funny side (I think) when they responded: We were amused to note that Brian had developed Australian connections and become 'Bruce'! I hope they will forgive me as I'm extremely grateful for their report, which is an important contribution to the paper we are preparing for publication in the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Proceedings.

Vanessa Joseph

The Vale of Pewsey Project: Marden Henge and Cat's Brain Long Barrow Zoom Lecture by Jim Leary

The Vale of Pewsey is a wide, flat valley between Avebury and Stonehenge, with Cat's Brain Long Barrow almost exactly between the two but a bit closer to Avebury than Stonehenge. Marden Henge is just 2.5km to the west. These monuments tend to be left out of investigative projects and popular publications in favour of the well-known sites. In fact, neglect of the lower ground goes back to the antiquarians, who thought it probably was swampy and uninteresting in prehistory.

The vale is off the chalk with a much older geology and looser, but very productive, soils. It is easy to lose monuments, especially as that's where people lived, ploughed up the ground and built settlements. Only once aerial photography took off was it realised just how much was actually there. Eventually, funding was obtained for a field school, which took place from 2015-17 under Reading University, working closely with Wiltshire Museum in Devizes.



Marden Henge is the largest in the county at about 530m N-S and 360m E-W, and only a little smaller than Durrington Walls. The LIDAR image shows that it is well preserved in parts, particularly to the east and north, though the best preserved part is in the north-west quadrant through the trees. A line of houses follows the line of the south-west quadrant. The circular feature close to the southern end of these houses is very clear, but there is another that's almost invisible between the central polygon of hedges and the gap in the banks on the east. This was a large mound, surrounded by the ditch from which the material came – perhaps 70m in diameter and 15m high. It was dug by Colt Hoare and Cunnington in 1807, only to find that there was no burial and the sandy material fell apart as they dug. This seems to have been similar to Silbury Hill in design and, perhaps, ceremonial purpose,

albeit rather smaller. That Silbury is at the head of the River Kennett and Marden Henge by the source of the Avon gives a possible link. Although the dating programme isn't complete, Marden also seems to have been built around 2450 BC, about the same time as Silbury and Durrington Walls.

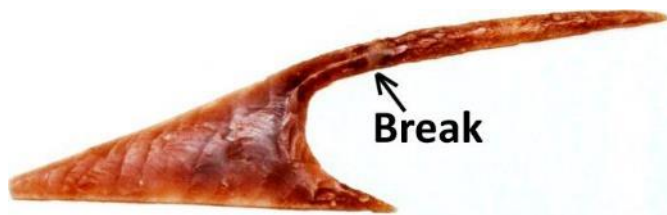
They excavated the southern feature and discovered that it was a small Neolithic henge within the larger henge. Final cleaning across the centre revealed the chalk floor and post holes of a Neolithic round house, within which was a square sunken area and a central circular hearth; these people clearly liked their geometry, particularly as there was also a square of holes around the hearth – possibly for stone uprights though more likely for massive wooden posts. It is very unusual to find such a well-preserved Neolithic building, suggested with some uncertainty as a sweat lodge, which even had replastering of the edge of the sunken area – effectively the remains of a wall.



A great deal was found within this small henge before the floor level was reached. In particular, there were the remains of perhaps 30 pigs, with the bones quite fresh, and pottery that's associated with drinking beer – it appears that there was a massive party there. The archaeologists held their own party

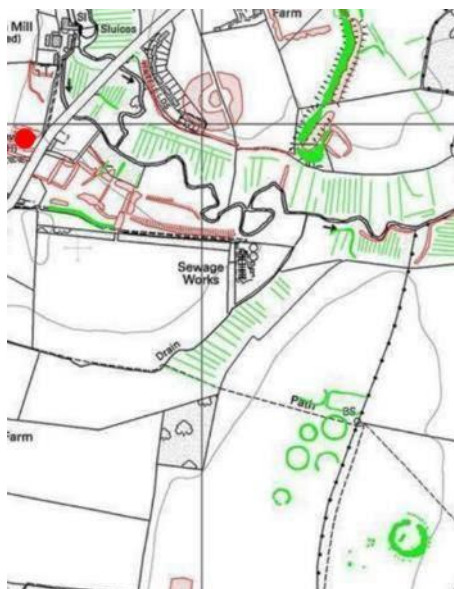
(sorry, reconstruction) to compare the remains with those found.

Part of an exceptional flint arrowhead had been found in 2010, but remarkably their excavations discovered the missing piece; it is usually on display at the museum in Devizes. Modern knappers have not been able come very close to being able to reproduce it convincingly. There was also a good deal of the highly decorated Grooved Ware, a style that seems to have originated in Neolithic Orkney. One complete Grooved Ware pot had been smashed, perhaps deliberately, and had the first known example of a slip fired into the surface, made from bone ash (animal species not known). A further example has subsequently been found at the Ness of Brodgar on Orkney. There were also several examples of bone pins and tools.



The excavations discovered the remains of houses under the henge banks from what had been quite a sizeable settlement. Clearly there was something about the site that made it important enough to destroy a settlement to make the henges. Henges are, of course, defined by the bank being outside the ditch (so Stonehenge isn't one really), so that it's not the best defensive structure for people inside the henge. This does, though, bring thoughts of whether henges were a 'defence' from something inside the henge.

Excavations along the southern side of the main henge showed that it actually made use of a natural post-glacial feature. We tend to think of these ancient monuments as planned and then set down, but it seems that here they were enhancing the natural landscape rather than imposing their own design.



To the south across the river lies the small Wilsford Henge (bottom right), close to a ploughed-out barrow cemetery. There are the remains of a Romano-British settlement just to the west of the barrows but not visible here. Modern Marden runs south-west along the road from the inn marked with a red circle, with abandoned medieval settlement to the east of the inn along the river. Remains of their ridge and furrow fields are visible, as they are on the LIDAR scan above.

Arcs of probable post holes appear outside the Wilsford henge ditch, probably a complete circle originally, with some inside too. Excavating two of them showed how large they were (the ranging rods are 2 metres), with ramps for placing stones or huge posts, though it was uncertain which. They pre-dated the henge.



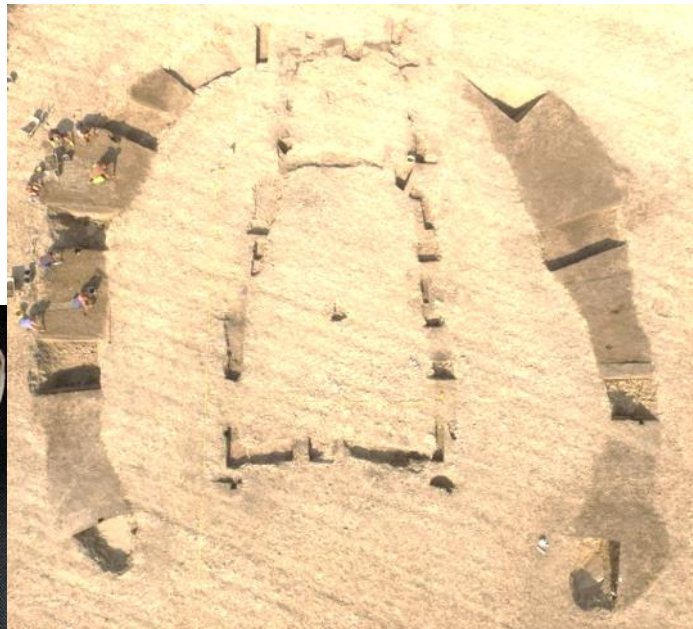
Although this was a relatively small henge, the ditch (below) was clearly not tiny. The paler soil at the bottom is Neolithic, probably washed in. The much darker layer above it dates to the late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age, and looks to be a midden from the centre of the henge that was pushed into the ditch, probably in the Romano-British period. A cut within it revealed an inhumation of a young boy from the middle Bronze Age, around 15 from the teeth and bones, buried with an amber necklace. He showed signs of iron deficiency, had a broken collarbone and the signs of huge muscles – he had done so much walking and lifting that his knee joints had begun to wear, even at this young age.

The ploughed-out Cat's Brain was thought to be a long barrow from aerial photos from at least the 1950s, like that below, though the trapezoidal structure in the centre then seen seemed to have gone.



The project's series of trial test pits also found few traces, but cleaning the site slowly revealed its outlines, as seen in the series of vertical photographs Jim showed. By the end the remains of the building were very clear, as can be seen below. It was large at about 20m long, with the remains of some of the beams and posts preserved by burning. It dated to the early Neolithic period, c.3800 BC, and could well have been a communal building for the early Neolithic newcomers, originally from the Anatolian region.

The burning of this, and similar buildings, seems to have been deliberate – it isn't easy to burn huge timbers, especially down to the ground. Hard chalk blocks, deliberately inscribed, were found in the post holes, similar to ones from the Cissbury flint mines. Their meaning will, of course, never be known.



The long barrow's banana-shaped ditches are obvious, and came rather later than the building, in the middle of the Neolithic. Flint tools were found in the ditches, as well as a good deal

of the early-mid Neolithic Peterborough ware pictured here.



These monuments encompass the whole of the story of Neolithic Britain, from the early settlement of incomers and through the established culture in the middle of the period. Marden, along with the other monumental work at the time, may represent the 'last gasp' of that culture against the influx of the 'Beaker people' from the continent, bringing with them metals and different ways of doing things. Originally from the Russian steppes, they also brought the plague with them, perhaps why the existing population were almost completely replaced over a few hundred years.

Geoff Taylor

Voices from Roman Britain

It might be thought that Roman Britain was something of a backwater in the Empire, with few standing remains and very few major British protagonists in Roman history. Rome alone has around 100,000 published inscriptions on stone, compared to about 4,000 for Britannia. Publicising yourself and your status with public inscriptions – the ‘epigraphic habit’ – never really took off here, and those known are mainly by soldiers and foreigners. Yet, as Alex Mullen¹ explores in the article² I’ve summarised here, there is much to be learnt from the epigraphs we do have – writing on all sorts of things.

There are, of course, some particularly famous Latin texts that have been found in Britain – the Vindolanda tablets, from the Roman fortress near Hadrian’s Wall, and the Bloomberg tablets found on the site of that company’s European Headquarters in the City of London. But, beyond the public inscriptions on stone, Roman-period writing comes from several other sources, such as graffiti on pottery (with several examples found at Druce Roman villa) and curse tablets. Evidence of writing also comes in other forms, notably ink wells and the styli used to write on wax tablets and smooth over the surface. A bone stylus was found at Druce, as well as the folding knife shown here, quite possibly used for splitting and sharpening quills to use as pens.



New finds from excavations and responsible metal detectorists continually add to our knowledge, as do existing texts that are revealed, or improved, on old finds but using new techniques (e.g. Reflectance Transformation Imaging, which uses software to combine images from many different angles to ‘map’ the surface of an object in very fine detail). Digital resources, such as the ‘Roman Inscriptions of Britain’ (<https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/>), make searching for inscriptions and locating their source(s) ever easier. What the words themselves explicitly reveal is clearly important, such as what we’ve learnt about the activities of Roman auxiliary soldiers in the north of Britannia, and about their links to other places. Sociolinguistics can take this further by combining the words with social factors, e.g. by considering who was (and wasn’t) using Latin, in what contexts, for what purpose(s), where they were and so on. Hence, in particular, how fast did the use of Latin spread and what happened to the local language(s)?

Written items, as well as writing equipment, clearly give evidence for the spread of Latin, since the evidence is that almost everything that was written was in Latin. It seems very clear that the rural population, the vast majority of Romano-Britons, were usually illiterate and presumably much slower to learn some Latin than in the urban centres (and, perhaps, villas?). This isn’t, though, true everywhere and, for example, both the Chilterns and Cotswolds show a greater degree of rural literacy. Roads, production centres and higher status seem to have been drivers spreading the Latin language.

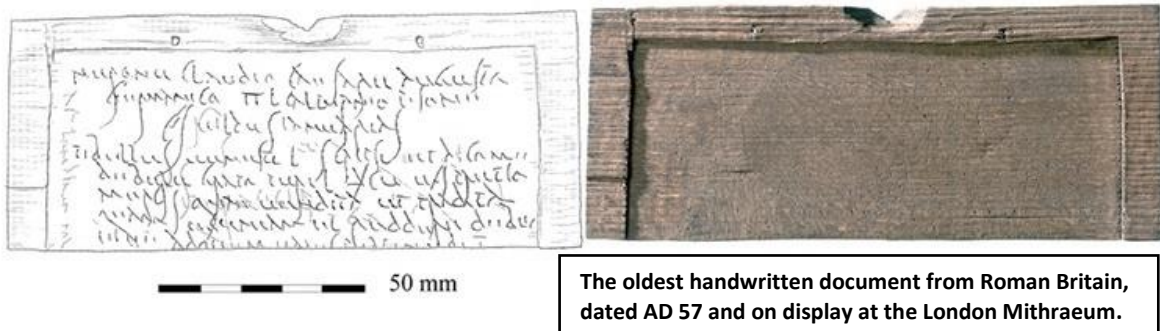
Looking more closely at the details of Latin inscriptions, especially local variations, might give clues as to contact with, and even assimilation of, British Celtic (the ancestor of the Brittonic, or Brithonic, languages like Welsh, Cornish and Breton). Contact between languages is certainly evidenced by occasional Latin loan words in



An oculist’s stamp in the British Museum, 4.4cm square. The owner’s name, M. JULIUS SATYRUS, appears (reversed) in the familiar Roman square capitals on each edge, whilst much more difficult to read informal cursive, or handwritten, lettering appears on the faces. It was apparently found at Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, suggesting that it came from a rural area near the edge of the Chilterns and close to a Roman road.

Brittonic languages, such as Welsh *ysgrifennu* ('to write'), derived from *scribendum*. In the 'other direction', place, personal and deity's names in otherwise Latin inscriptions have long been taken to show Celtic identity, e.g. the apparently Celtic goddess Sulis shown as Sulis Minerva in various inscriptions from Bath. Ascribing identity on the basis of a name is, though, not without its problems; I'm sure you can think of many 'foreign' names given to English people.

Two case studies show just some of the conclusions that can be drawn from the study of written items from Roman Britain. The first concerns the 1st century AD Bloomberg tablets, even though less than a quarter of the over 400 found have provided legible texts. These are formal documents concerning business and legal affairs, with contents suggesting some authors were local people and that others came from the Continent. Strikingly, they are entirely in Latin and written in the correct forms for Roman documentation – a literacy package taken directly from the wider Empire. The driver, of course, was economic – the desire to do business.



Whilst it was thought that British Celtic never became a written language, despite Latin never becoming fully embedded in Britain, two curse tablets from Bath and another two from Uley suggest otherwise. The same verb is used at both sites. Although there is the possibility that these are in the Gaulish Celtic language, with foreign visitors known to have travelled to Bath, that is much less likely for the lesser-known Romano-British sanctuary at Uley. We have Roger Tomlin to thank for much of the very difficult task of deciphering these, as we do for many other examples of cursive Latin text from Britain. The illustration here, of just part of one of the Bath curse tablets, might give some idea of what can be faced in deciding just what letters were intended.



Even just from these examples, it can be seen that studying Roman epigraphy, beyond the monumental texts on stone, can add to what these 'voices from the past' reveal.

1. Alex Mullen is Associate Professor of Classics at Nottingham University, and leads a team working on the sociolinguistics of the north-western Roman provinces.
2. Voices from Roman Britain. *Omnibus* 83, the March 2022 magazine of the Classical Association.

Geoff Taylor

'The Most Riotous, Unprincipled Men' – The Main Characters, Part 2

In the last newsletter I looked at the Lords of the Chase (two generations of Lord Rivers), Lord Anglesey and William Castleman. It was relatively easy to find information on them as they were prominent figures in their day, although Castleman was more challenging than the others. The characters this time and next were leading members of the Handley Torches, John Strutt Peyton and Harry Dibben, and they were much more private people. This is why there are no portraits of them – at least that I could find on the internet. Although some records do still exist, with both there are areas of uncertainty or, to put it

another way, areas for future research. This article is about Harry Dibben; John Peyton will appear next month as I recently stumbled across a reference to an article about him in the Milford-on-Sea Historical Society magazine, which I hope will fill some of the gaps in my research, and it has not yet arrived.

Harry Dibben

The Dibbens were a local farming family. Parents Harry (sometimes Henry) and Sarah (nee Kaile) were both 'of the parish of Cranborne' when married there on the 24th August 1766, though it seems neither was born there. By 1769 they were living at Horton, where daughter Sarah was baptised on the 25th December. Daughters Elizabeth and Mary followed in 1772 and 1776, before Harry in 1778 (baptised 19th April). By the time the next son, Joseph, was born in 1784, the family had moved to Stoke Wake, 12km west of Blandford. Another son, John, had also joined the family but there doesn't appear to be a surviving record of his baptism.

Harry Sr. lived at Stoke Wake until his death in 1807, by which time he had accrued significant wealth. The 1805 land tax records show that he farmed 6 estates in that area alone, with a total land tax assessment of £16 2s 6d. He left two leasehold estates in Sixpenny Handley parish to Harry Jr., with his 'leasehold messuage and tenement' at Stoke Wake passing to his wife and on her death to son John, and a freehold estate at nearby Belchalwell to Joseph. The daughters had £20 each.

Harry Sr.'s 'place of abode' is given as Stoke Wake, but he was buried at Sixpenny Handley, as was Sarah in 1809. In 1808, Sarah and Joseph were at the Sixpenny Handley estates at Deanland, so Harry Sr. was probably also there when he died; it seems likely that both were cared for by Joseph in their final years. At that time Harry Jr. was farming at Woolland, not far from Stoke Wake; he had married farmer's daughter Maria Jeanes at nearby Fifehead Neville on 24th June 1807. John had taken over Harry Sr.'s farms at Stoke Wake in 1805, and he was also the assessor for the land tax returns.

Harry Jr. continued at Woolland until 1811 and their children, Sarah-Ann and then William were baptised there, but he then took over 2 farms at Winterborne Houghton, where his daughter Ann was baptised in May 1813 and son Mark in 1817. After exchanging one of the farms his total land tax assessment came to £28 9s 6d, showing that he was becoming a wealthy man.

The timing becomes a little uncertain here as Harry held these farms until 1817 when brother John apparently took them over, but only for a year. It is unclear when Harry Jr. moved to Sixpenny Handley as the first record is for the baptism of his son Aaron in February 1820, who sadly died at 9 weeks old. Harry Jr. is stated to be a 'yeoman of Dean Land', having presumably taken over the two Sixpenny Handley estates from his brother Joseph, almost certainly in 1817 when he vacated the farms at Winterborne Houghton.

It is strange that Harry Jr. moved from farms with a total assessed value of £28 9s 6d to the estates at Deanland, which were only assessed at £1 0s 8d. But Harry also moved to Sixpenny Handley parish just about the time when the troubles on Cranborne Chase were really beginning with the Court Day Riots of 1818 and 1819 (see January newsletter for more details). Despite this, and Harry's leading role in the Handley Torches, he quite clearly prospered. Jury lists from 1825 to 1846 show that Harry progressed from yeoman to leaseholder to maltster and finally, by 1840, freeholder of the estates bequeathed in his father's will. Harry Sr. and John presumably had more in common with the Cranborne Chase landowners striving for disenfranchisement, as did Harry Jr. whilst at Winterborne Houghton, but he sided with those fighting it. Could this be because by 1830 he had an increasing dependence on the locals as customers for his brewing activities?

Harry and Maria had 5 more children in their time at Deanland – Mansell (1821), Aaron (1823), Frank (1827), David (1827) and Cordelia (1832). The Handley Torches were identified as part of the Swing Riots in 1830, but the emergence of Harry Dibben as one of the two leaders was a little later, when the organisation began a campaign of vandalism in support of Harry's legal challenge in 1832 against the enclosures of common land (perhaps after his last child was born). He won the court case in 1834, staving off enclosure for a decade or more.

The lands and farm buildings at Deanland can be identified from the 1835-50 tithe map, about a mile north of the village.

Harry died in 1848, succeeded at Deanland by son Aaron, who continued as both farmer and maltster. The farmhouse is shown on the 1888 6in OS map as a 'beer house', but was still in the Dibben family, with Aaron's sister Mansell and then her husband George Oxford (a miller) after her death in 1891. It isn't known when the farmhouse became the 'Hop and Barleycorn', but it was under this name that it closed in 1972 and became the private residence pictured, known as Barleycorn House.



To be continued...

Alan Dedden

Weblink Highlights Midsummer 2022

Obviously more than a month's worth, but a bumper crop of weblinks this time.

The first to catch my eye was the piece on the sentencing of a couple of metal detectorists for damaging the Dunadd Iron Age hill fort. The article included a photograph of some of the damage and, as would be expected for metal detectorist activity, it was shallow trowel penetration of the surface. The repeated use of metre long pegs at Lake Gates for the circus that regularly pitches there without doubt has the potential for much greater damage, but that is actually irrelevant because the protection for the scheduled area is not to break the surface. Whilst the slight surface damage may well have been the best option for a conviction in the case of Dunadd hill fort, rather than the taking of the objects, it does show that, if the will exists, convictions are possible. Apparently not so in Dorset. The recent planning application for an 'events facility' at Lake Gates (with the buildings placed directly on the fort) brought forth many objections, which included statements on the repeated use of 1m pegs on this site and the potential for damage they bring.

It is perhaps my engineering background that attracted me to the news that the SS Great Britain Trust will build a replica of that ship to be exhibited alongside the restored SS Great Western. A wonderful enterprise that rightly honours an outstanding and pioneering engineer. Is anyone brave enough to try the same for SS Great Eastern?

Alan Dedden

Midsummer Weblinks

Bones Found In Devon Cave Belonged To Some Of Britain's Earliest Humans [here](#)

Metal Detectorists Find Hoard Of 150 Roman Coins In Vale Of Pewsey [here](#)

Medieval Hand Grenade Found In Jerusalem [here](#)

3D Scans Reveal Largest Cave Art In North America [here](#)

Long Barrow Of Neolithic Men Holds Single 'Warrior Woman' [here](#)

Carvings Of Ancient Ritual Bloodletting May Have Been Found In Mexico [here](#)

Police Investigate Damage To Iron Age Broch [here](#)

13th Century Northumberland Seal Goes To Auction [here](#)

Remains Of Aztec Dwelling Found In Mexico City [here](#)

Iron Age Arrow Found On Norwegian Mountain Still Has Fletchings [here](#)

Cambodia Seeks Return Of Looted Treasures [here](#)

Early Mesolithic Hunting Pits Found In Stonehenge Landscape [here](#)

Endurance Wreck Threatened By Global Warming Warns Marine Archaeologist [here](#)

Caesar's Favourite Herb Was Viagra Of Ancient Rome - Until Killed Off By Climate Change [here](#)

Analysis Of Ancient Faeces Reveals Stonehenge Builders Ate Undercooked Offal [here](#)

30ft Wingspan 'Dragon Of Death' Unearthed In Argentina [here](#)

Ancient Mayan City Found At Mexico Construction Site [here](#)

Roman Soldier Labelled A "S***r" In Vindolanda Graffiti [here](#)**

Lost Cities Of The Amazon Discovered By Lidar [here](#)

Roman Road Found In Pembrokeshire [here](#)

2 Historic Shipwrecks Found In Caribbean [here](#)

The Gloucester Shipwreck Hailed Most Important Since Mary Rose [here](#)

Europe's Largest Predator Dinosaur Found On Isle Of Wight [here](#)

Brunel's Steamer Great Western To Be Rebuilt [here](#)

Skeletal Remains Of Six Bodies Found Under Cork Pub [here](#)

Researchers Claim To Have Identified The Source Of The Black Death [here](#)

Anglo-Saxon Burial Ground Found During HS2 Excavations In Buckinghamshire [here](#)

Mystery Of Waterloo's Dead To Be Re-examined [here](#)

Legendary Spanish Galleon Shipwreck Discovered On Oregon Coast [here](#)

New Research Shows Trusted Norman Monk Was Behind Domesday Book [here](#)

Volunteer Archaeologists Discover 'Exceptional' Roman Temple [here](#)

Finds Reveal Canterbury Suburbs Home To Britain's Earliest Humans [here](#)

Metal Detectorists Sentenced After Damaging Iron Age Fort [here](#)

Canadian Gold Miner Finds Mummified 35,000 Year-old Woolly Mammoth [here](#)

Roman Hoard Found By Metal Detectorists In North Wales Declared Treasure [here](#)

Early Human Fossils From Sterkfontein May Be 1m Years Older Than Previously Thought [here](#)

Find From 2017 Building Work At West London School Declared Treasure [here](#)

Rise Of Dinosaurs Due To Their Adaptation To Cold [here](#)

Jawbone Found In Spain Could Be Oldest European Human Fossil [here](#)

The July '22 Chase & Chalke Newsletter is [HERE](#)

Havhingsten fra Glendalough (Sea Stallion from Glendalough)

As we learnt in the earlier article (January 2022 newsletter), the *Sea Stallion* is a Danish reconstruction of a Viking longship, made and based at the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, Denmark. Its basic design comes from *Skuldelev 2*, one of the Viking ships found after being sunk as part of a barrier in Roskilde Fjord in the 11th century, to protect what was then effectively the Danish capital.

Dendrochronology showed that it was actually built in or near Dublin around 1042. In the full name, Glendalough is a valley in the Wicklow Mountains south of Dublin, which had one of the most important Irish monasteries then and was the centre of the forests that provided timber for Dublin.



This article expands on the recovery and reconstruction of *Skuldelev 2*, leading to building the *Sea Stallion* 'replica', with more on *Sea Stallion*'s voyages in a later article. It is mainly based on a short paperback¹ which is still available from several sources online if you'd like to know more (almost all the photographs are © Viking Ship Museum). The Viking longship was, of course, what brought Viking warriors, death and destruction to Britain, but was also the means of transport that linked places together. This bridge was important in the unification of the Nordic kingdoms and, for a short time, even bound England together with Norway, Denmark and Southern Sweden in Canute's 'North-Sea Empire' (Canute, or Cnut, ruled England 1017-1035).

Skuldelev 2 was the second ship found in Roskilde Fjord, in 1957, but it was at the top of the barrier from a second building phase around 1070, and had suffered the greatest damage of all the 5 ships. Although only 25% of the ship survived, that included many of the most important parts in determining its structure, which had often fallen off. First, though, the pieces had to be recovered and conserved.

A coffer dam enclosing 1600m² was built around the site in 1962 and the water pumped out. Bacteria



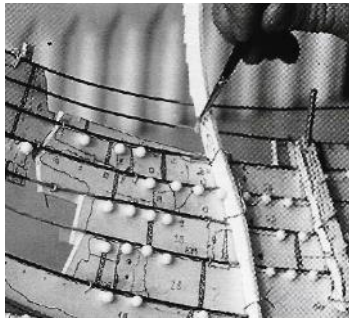
had degraded the cells of the wood so that only the cell walls remained, kept together by the water that had replaced what had been lost. If the remains dried out they would simply crumble to dust, and metal tools would have sliced through the soft material. For 3 months, archaeologists

worked under a constant mist of water from sprinklers keeping everything wet. Every piece was surveyed, photographed, described, numbered, labelled, packed and removed, mostly with bare hands.



In the conservation laboratory each piece was drawn in the finest detail at 1:1 scale, before being conserved. The water in the wood was replaced with polyethylene glycol (PEG), a method that is now fairly well known but was pioneering in the 1960s. PEG is an artificial wax, soluble in water, mouldable when heated but firm at normal room temperature. The pieces were placed in baths of PEG solution at 60°C for many years, though I couldn't find out how long was actually needed. In any case, the reconstructed pieces couldn't be set up in the museum until 1993, only 3 years after they felt that dendrochronological techniques had advanced sufficiently to accurately date and locate the timbers.

One of the key questions that had proved most difficult was the length of the hull, as nothing coherent survived from fore to aft and the forward part of the ship was lost. The 1:1

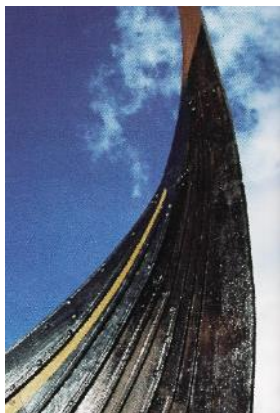


drawings were reduced to 1:10, cut from cardboard and fitted together, as shown, which only worked to give even lines along the ship if it was from 29.2m to 31.4m long.



It was decided to build *Sea Stallion* at the shorter end of this range, at 29.4m, but much else needed to be settled before construction could start. The ship is a piece of experimental archaeology and, though much of the hull could copy the original design, as can be seen, little survived as a guide to the upper parts of the longship. A wooden model was used to test different approaches, heavily informed by the remains of other Viking era ships. Even then, much of the actual construction is experimental, based on modern boatbuilders' practical experience – e.g. what parts of an oak tree are best for different parts of the ship, what tools were used and how, how and where should the rigging be attached? Construction began in 2000, and some of the key parts are described below.

The keel of a Viking ship was never a single piece of wood, but usually a long length with much shorter extensions curving up at the ends. An 18m straight oak trunk was needed for *Sea Stallion* and proved difficult to find, but eventually came from Lolland, the southernmost of the Danish islands. The longest known single length of keel is 28m on the 36m *Roskilde 6* mentioned in the earlier article.



Strakes are the long planks that make up the shell of the ship and, as with all Viking ships, *Sea Stallion* is clinker built, i.e. the strakes overlap from the top down and are then joined by nails. Although the strakes appear to be continuous along the whole ship, they are actually butt joined from planks 8-10m long, with shorter pieces near the bow and stern that appear to bend upwards. Decorative pieces were added so that the strakes appear to continue right to the tips of the stems, the upright ends of the ship. The shaping and fixing of strakes to stems was one of the most important jobs in building the ship because of the stresses involved in sailing; the *stafnasmidr* or stem-smith was one of the highest paid of the craftsmen.



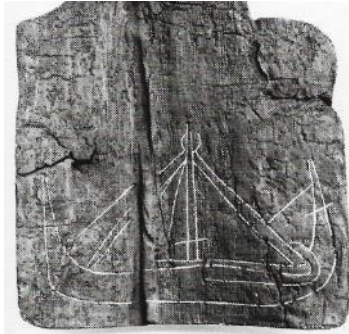
Although none of the iron nails in *Skuldelev 2* survived, the holes and impressions they left showed their sizes, shapes and uses fairly clearly. Most of the 8,000 used in *Sea Stallion* were clench nails, with a round head and 8-9mm round shank driven through a previously drilled hole. A square iron 'rove' fitted over the shank acted like a washer, with part of the shank cut off and the rest hammered flat over it. Analysis of Viking nails



showed they were very low carbon and pure, so softer to clench and much less prone to rust.

Trenails of willow, found in many Viking ships, were used to join pieces where flexibility was needed, such as in joining the transverse V-shaped floor-timbers to the lower strakes. Above each floor-timber, horizontal bars across the width define the 'rooms', the space in which each pair of oarsmen would work. As in the earlier article, these were quite short on *Skuldelev 2* at 73cm, sacrificing length of stroke, and hence speed, for numbers of warriors. I've not been able to find out the room size on *Sea Stallion*, but it may be slightly more as she is normally crewed by less people than *Skuldelev 2*.

Although tar was used to protect the iron on *Sea Stallion*, it isn't clear if that happened in Viking times as it decomposes in sea water and tends only to survive on wooden parts (if any iron actually survives). The tar used to protect the wood on the Skuldelev ships was found to be wood tar from resinous pine trees. Production would have involved careful stacking of pine cloven into small pieces, covering with turf and setting alight around the base. It requires several days of careful tending to keep the fire burning at sufficient heat to drive the tar out of the pine for collection without the stack burning away.



Deciding on the sails and rigging was certainly a challenge, as very little survives anywhere. However, various surviving Viking ship parts give a very good idea of where and how rigging was attached and operated, and there is even surviving graffiti giving clues, like that shown from Dublin. With this information as a basis, 20 years of sailing Viking reconstructions show that the design principles are the same as those for more recent traditional square-sailed Scandinavian ships. These principles were used to determine the height of the mast and, hence, sail, whilst its width could be calculated from the rigging points.

Sea Stallion's sail is huge at 112m² and made of flax fibre, which is light and strong, though can rot quite easily. Evidence suggests most Viking sails were of this or of wool, though wool is more elastic and more difficult to treat to 'hold' the wind. The 2,200m of cordage, mostly for rigging, was handmade of hemp, twisted and joined to the necessary thickness and treated with tar where needed. Hemp was known to the Vikings but *Skuldelev 2* would probably have had 'lime-bast' cordage from the flexible under-bark of lime (or linden) trees. The stronger hemp was used here because of safety concerns on such a large ship.

Many Viking tools have been found, including a wooden chest from the island of Gotland that contained



over 100 well preserved tools, particularly for woodworking and smithing. There is also illustrative material of tools in use, not least on the Bayeux Tapestry. The main tools in shipbuilding were axes of various sizes and types, used in both splitting and shaping wood, and augers to drill the holes. Many were little different from those used to do the same jobs today. However,

toolmarks on Viking ships show that planes were only used on the most prestigious vessels, whilst a lot of smoothing was done with a T-shaped 'broadaxe' sharpened on one side, which is fairly unfamiliar today. Perhaps surprisingly, saw marks are completely absent from Viking ships, although some short saws are known from that period. Perhaps they could not compete with skills developed using axes and their variants for hundreds of years.



Sea Stallion is painted in red, yellow and blue, inspired by the colours of William the Conqueror's fleet on the Bayeux Tapestry, but all found in traces on different Viking ships. Red and yellow come from naturally occurring ochre, blue from woad plants and the binding agent is linseed oil, produced from flax.

By the time *Sea Stallion* was launched in September 2004 she had cost around 27,000 man hours of construction effort and over €1 million. In the Viking period it is thought that another 13,000 man hours would have been used making tar, sails and cordage, as well as transporting up to 30 tons of roughly hewn timber to the shipyard. Another 10,000 man hours was probably needed to produce the ironwork – perhaps 130 tons of wood to provide the charcoal and 3 tons of ore to be smelted and forged into 450kg of iron items. In total that is about 15-20 man-years of effort, obviously only possible for a powerful person with large resources at their disposal.

Of course, the experimental archaeology continued with sea trials and then longer voyages, an area to be covered in a future article.

1. Anon. 2007. *Welcome on board! The Sea Stallion from Glendalough: A Viking longship recreated*. Viking Ship Museum: Roskilde, Denmark.

Geoff Taylor

Events & activities

Ancient Technology Centre, Cranborne

Dark Ages weekend 30th & 31st July, 10am-4pm

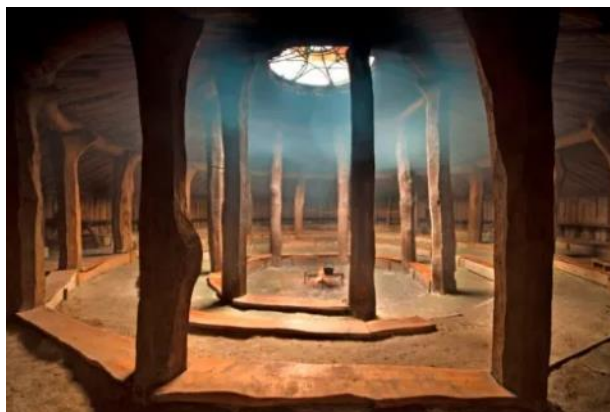
Cranborne Middle School entrance, Damerham Road, Cranborne BH21 5RP

Adults £10, children £5, under 4s free

EDAS is running a free 'have a go at excavation' event, particularly aimed at youngsters, all weekend. We'll also have information on our excavations and finds on display, so do come and see us.

Other events include more things for people to have a go at, a range of Living History displays and demonstrations, and story-telling.

More information [HERE](#)



Dorset Archaeological Days

These are a series of FREE guided walks and other events, such as car tours, organised through Dorset Council's archaeologists. The current list of events is [HERE](#) (I'm afraid that I got the information too late for the first walk – the organisers are having a few computer glitches), but it will be added to.

Although these events are free, places are limited and you MUST BOOK through the link on the website.

Discover Dorchester

I didn't know about this organisation, funded by Dorchester Town Council, until they wrote to me about one of their latest events – 'Home of Hillforts and Henges', part of the CBA's 'Festival of Archaeology'. This is being launched on Thursday 21st July from 5pm, with "an appropriately themed evening and the museum will be open free for members of the public from 5pm to 7pm". See [HERE](#)

It's not entirely clear from that page what is included in the overall event, but if you browse through their events at <https://discoverdorchester.co.uk/events/> you'll see that there are many archaeology-related walks, talks and activities, including a talk on the 'Prehistoric Landscape around Dorchester' and another on 'Bournemouth University's Durotriges Project', walks around 'Outer Casterbridge' and along the Roman road in Thorncombe Wood, and a guided tour of Maiden Castle.

The Hillforts and Henges event concludes with the 'HengeFest' - a family fun day at Maumbury Rings ([HERE](#)), but there are lots of other activities after that. HengeFest is free, but other events aren't and do need to be booked.

St Andrew's Church, Winterborne Tomson

In last month's article on the church, it was said that this was the only church in Dorset with an apse. In fact, several other Dorset churches do have apses, including St Peter's in Bournemouth. St Andrew's church is, though, rare in being single-celled yet still with an apse.

EDAS PROGRAMME

Unless otherwise stated, and subject to coronavirus restrictions, lectures are from 7:30 – 9:30 pm at St Catherine’s Church Hall, Lewens Lane, Wimborne, BH21 1LE.

2022			
Wed 14 th Sept	Lecture	Lilian Ladle	The Romans at Druce Farm Villa: Mosaics, middens and military?
Wed 12 th Oct	Lecture	Helen Farr	Marine Archaeology in the Black Sea
Wed 9 th Nov	Lecture	Richard Hobbs	Hinton St Mary Mosaic: Fieldwork & excavations
Wed 14 th Dec	Lecture	Mike Gill	Redefining the Neolithic Map: Recent work on Cranborne Chase and Avon Valley long barrows
2023			
Wed 11 th Jan	Lecture	Julian Richards	The last wild Britain: the Mesolithic people at Springhead
Wed 8 th Feb	Lecture	Neil Meldrum	Ancient China
Wed 8 th March	AGM & lecture	To be announced	Subject tbd – recent EDAS work
Wed 12 th April	Lecture	Peter Cox	40 years of archaeology in Dorset
Wed 10 th May	Lecture	Clare Randall	The manor of Putton and the potential of medieval archaeology in Dorset

DISTRICT DIARY

No-one has posted anything (yet?), **but do let me know of anything you know or hear about.**

Wed 21 st Sept	Finding Nero (and other Roman Emperors), after AGM	Wareham Society	Miles Russell
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Archaeology Societies

- Avon Valley Archaeological Society: <http://www.avas.org.uk/>
Meetings at Ann Rose Hall, Greyfriars Community Centre, Christchurch Road, Ringwood BH24 1DW, 7:30pm 1st Wednesday of month except June, July & August. Visitors £3.50; membership £10 pa.
- Blandford Museum Archaeology Group:
<https://blandfordtownmuseum.org.uk/groups/archaeology-group-revised/>
Meetings normally 7:30pm 3rd Thursday of each month September to May at the Tabernacle. Visitors £3; membership £10 pa.
- Bournemouth Natural Sciences Society: <http://bnss.org.uk>
Events at 39 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BN1 3NS; lectures Tuesday 7:30pm/Saturday 2:30pm.
- The Christchurch Antiquarians: <https://christchurchantiquarians.wordpress.com/>
No lecture programme but involved in practical archaeology projects. Membership £10 pa.
- Dorset Natural History & Archaeology Society: <http://www.dorsetcountymuseum.org/events>
Events at various locations in Dorchester, usually ticketed
- Wareham and District Archaeology & Local History Society: Their website isn’t updated but they are on the Wareham Chimes site [here](http://www.warehamchimes.com), or contact Karen Brown at karen.brown68@btinternet.com
Meetings at Furzebrook Village Hall, BH20 5AR, normally 7:30pm 3rd Wednesday of each month except July & August. Visitors welcome for £3; membership £10 pa.