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East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER – October 2022

Last month's lecture was, of course, by Lilian Ladle, which Andrew has written about: **The Rise and Decline of Druce Farm Roman Villa c. 60-650 CE**. As he points out, this was the major excavation undertaken by EDAS, under the guidance of Lilian (and, though he's too modest to say so, of himself). You'll know from earlier newsletters how important Lilian's BAR Monograph, with the same title as the lecture, was thought to be by the peer reviewers.

Watch out for information about the opportunity to buy the book at a much discounted price, and put the free Launch Conference in your diary: Saturday 26th November from 1.30 to 5.00pm at the Kimmeridge Lecture Theatre, Bournemouth University.

This month we have Dr Helen Farr from Southampton University on *Marine Archaeology in the Black Sea*. She'll be telling us about the cutting edge technology used to record over 60 wrecks in depths of up to 2,000 metres, with footage of the most intact Classical Greek ship ever found. That's Wednesday 12th at 7:30pm.

Vanessa is asking for your contributions in **A History of Dorset in 40 Objects – we need your help**. She's asking for your top 10 items, though a shorter list is better than nothing. The 'history' is going to be part of celebrating the 40th year of EDAS in 2023, so we really need to include the views of EDAS members.

I need your contributions too or the newsletter is going to get shorter, as my 'bank' of articles is running low. Don't think 'someone else will do it' because they might not. I'm sure many of you have interesting stories, photographs, drawings, etc. Perhaps you have information about historical or archaeological places you've been. I don't mind how short or long your contribution is, or in what format, just please **send me something likely to be interesting for EDAS members (to the email or address above)**

I am really grateful to those who do contribute – in this issue Andrew and Vanessa of course, as well as Alan Dedden, Neil Meldrum, Sue Newman and Jo Crane for their long-running series. The **Weblinks** and **Highlights** are here and the 47th **View from Above: Stoney Littleton Long Barrow**. Neil's 14th article (April Newsletter) covered the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 BCE), which expanded the rule of the Han Chinese beyond the area of the preceding Xia. His 15th article looks at the Zhou, the succeeding dynasty and the longest in Chinese history: **Ancient China – the early Zhou**.

There's also the 4th in **From the Archives**, summarising articles in the early Dorset Proceedings, and an article on **The Gate of Hell** in Turkey.

Geoff Taylor

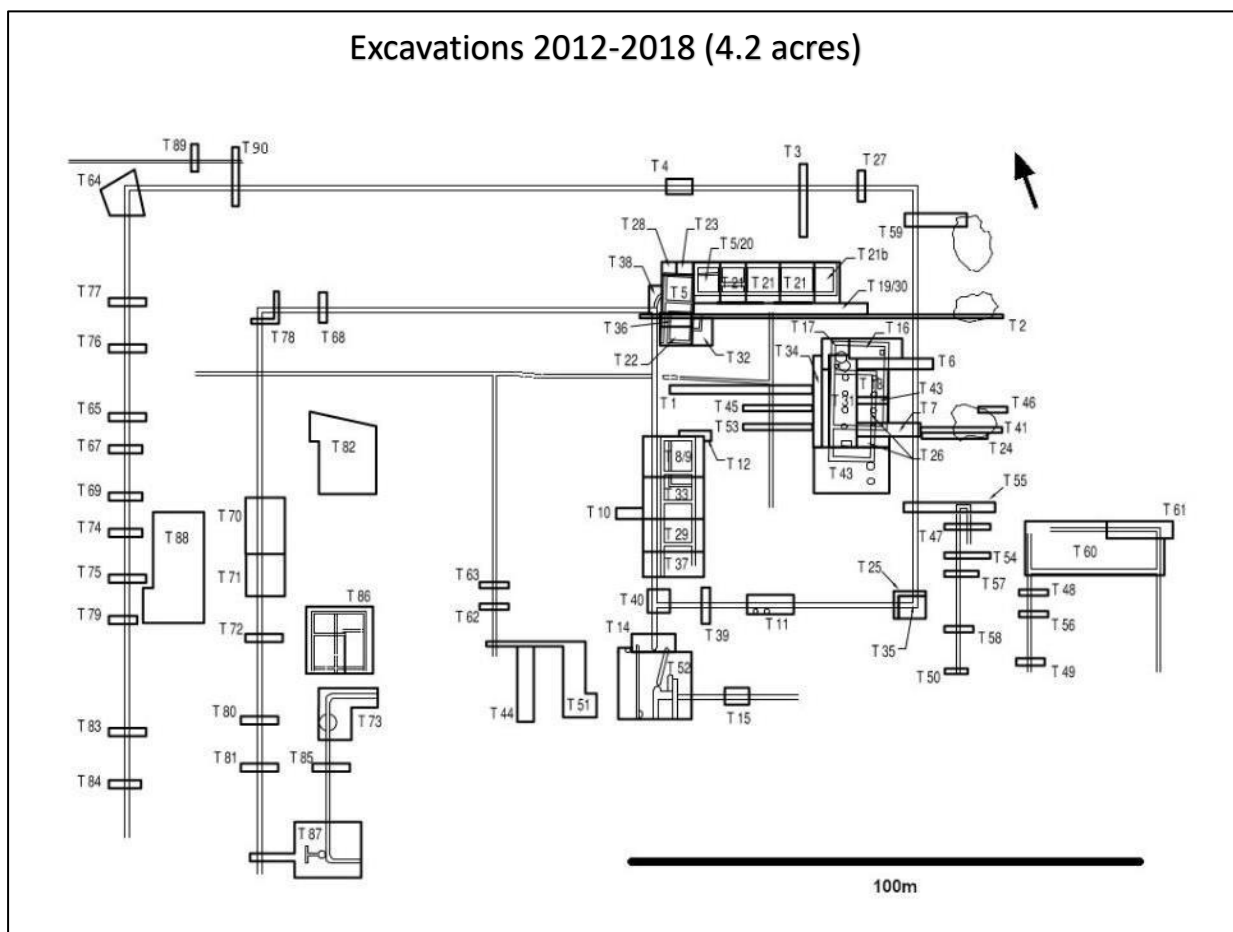
The Rise and Decline of Druce Farm Roman Villa c. 60-650 CE

Lecture by Lilian Ladle FSA, MBE

The first lecture in the EDAS 2022-2023 programme was by Lilian Ladle, EDAS Director of Archaeology. The Druce Roman Villa excavation was by far and away the largest and most significant archaeological project undertaken by EDAS and we are delighted that the findings are about to be published as a BAR Monograph. A number of people have made huge contributions to this work, including many EDAS members, but the central figure is Lilian, without whom we wouldn't have even started the project. Her range of practical skills and wealth of knowledge is only matched by her energy, commitment and drive, which were essential to achieve such a timely and successful conclusion.

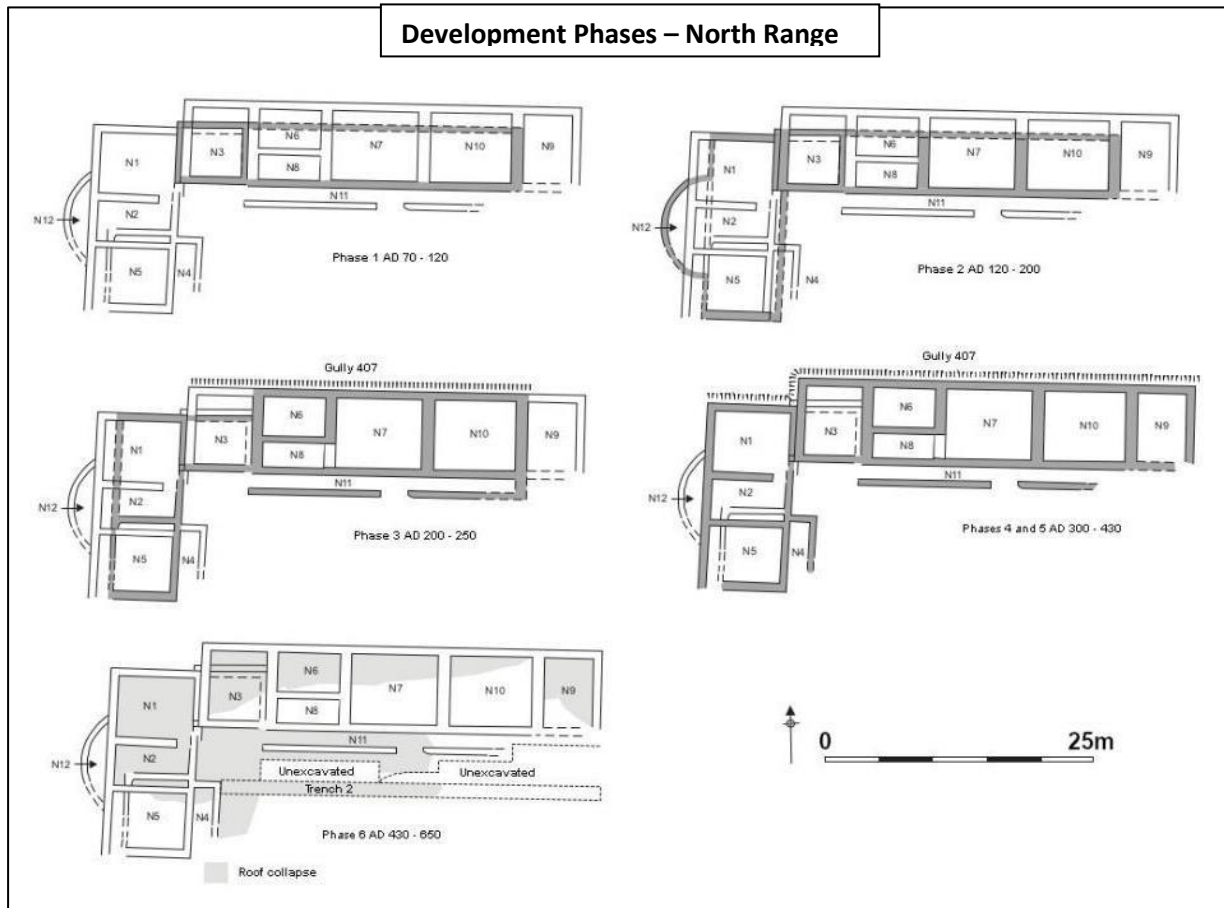
I will only provide a brief outline of the talk rather than our usual detailed description, because I would like to encourage everyone to attend a conference we have arranged to launch the Monograph on **Saturday 26th November from 1.30 to 5.00pm at the Kimmeridge Lecture Theatre, Bournemouth University**. A leaflet will be sent to all members and friends of the Society with further details.

It is worth appreciating the sheer scale of the project, which in the end was completed by a dedicated team of people who made a commitment to see the excavations through to the end. This wasn't your usual amateur dig of two or three weeks a year; at times the season extended to six months, only ending when the weather forced us off site.



On our first visit to the site we undertook systematic field walking in Lower Limepits field, where we found significant quantities of Roman building material; in fact, so much that we thought any buildings must have been ploughed out. However, it was more than enough to return the following year and open evaluation trenches, which located some walls and collapsed roof tiles. Over the years we excavated a villa complex, finding evidence of how the buildings had developed through time. We revealed a

domestic North Range, an Aisled Hall forming the East Range and a West Range of workshops. Not only were we able to identify a series of development phases for each range, but we could also identify the sequence of decay and eventual collapse to prove the longevity of the buildings well after the Roman withdrawal. In the adjacent field we discovered more, including another building – a rather modest construction, which has proved to be the oldest stone built Roman building yet found in Dorset. And, intriguingly, we have evidence of ongoing military presence.



A wealth of finds have been recovered and a number of experts engaged to provide their critical interpretations. Over the years we were grateful to several esteemed Roman experts who visited the site to make their assessments and help us develop the story of the site.

For those who want to catch up on past lectures about Druce please check out the articles in the following EDAS Newsletters available through the EDAS web-site: September 2012, October 2014 (a special Druce edition), Midsummer 2016 and April 2017.

Please note that, in the near future, we will send out details explaining how **you will be able to pre-order a copy of the monograph at a special discounted price.**

I hope you are able to come to the Launch Conference on November 26th and learn more about this important site. Please support the work achieved by the society and, most importantly, by our Lilian. We look forward to seeing you there.

Andrew Morgan

PS: We would also pay tribute to Ann Ridout who has recently passed away. She was the landowner who invited us to the site and provided essential support for the project. She was really keen that we reveal her villa and share it with the community.

A History of Dorset in 40 Objects - we need your help

There are so many wonderful landmarks and artefacts associated with the county of Dorset, each with its own fascinating story.

We're asking EDAS members and friends to share their 10 favourite Dorset items with us. They might be archaeological monuments, buildings, objects or artefacts, sacred places or features in the landscape.

Please send your top 10 to Vanessa at vanessaa.joseph@gmail.com before the end of the year.

I'll compile your lists and your top 40 will become part of our 40th anniversary celebrations next year. There might even be scope for a regular topic in the newsletter over the anniversary year. It would help if you can add a couple of lines on why you chose them, but it's not vital.

P.S. If Neil MacGregor could produce A History of the World in 100 Objects, surely we can manage 40 between our 250 EDAS members? I look forward to hearing from you.

A 'suffragette penny', number 95 in Neil Macgregor's list – an Edward VII penny inscribed with 'Votes for Women', probably in 1913. It's a reminder that an item doesn't have to be very old or obviously valuable to say something important about our history.



Vanessa Joseph

Weblink Highlights September 2022

The items this month yet again show how little we still know about the past. Whether it is the 1.8 million year-old tooth found in Georgia, or the roundel structure in the Czech Republic, or the world's oldest heart, these finds keep on reminding us of the limits of our knowledge.

However, two of the items also remind us that significant finds are not limited to exotic locations. Finding a hoard of gold coins, partly pictured here, under your kitchen floor and estimated to be worth £250k will surely pay for that kitchen renovation, but perhaps not a Grand Design! The idea that the hoard was deposited there by a wealthy mercantile family who distrusted the newly formed Bank of England perhaps also has some resonance today.

The Saxon burials under the Croydon car park remind us not only that rescue archaeology is important, but also that car parks can reveal surprises when properly investigated.

Alan Dedden



September Weblinks

Anglo-Saxon Treasures 'Return Home' For North-East Heritage Venture

[Anglo-Saxon treasures 'returning home' for north-east heritage venture | Museums | The Guardian](#)

31,000 Year Old Amputation Is World's Oldest Evidence Of Surgery

[World's oldest amputation: Foot removed 31,000 years ago—without modern antibiotics or painkillers | Science | AAAS](#)

£250k Gold Coin Hoard Found Under The Kitchen Floorboards

[Gold coin hoard worth \\$300K found beneath kitchen floor in England | Live Science](#)

1.8m-Year-Old Tooth Of Early Human Found On Dig In Georgia

[1.8m-year-old tooth of early human found on dig in Georgia | Archaeology | The Guardian](#)

Conserved Bronze Age Pot On Display Decades After Being Unearthed

[Bronze Age pot goes on display near where it was unearthed decades ago | HeraldScotland](#)

Islamic Era Gold And Silver Coin Hoard Found Behind Egyptian Temple

[Hoard of Islamic era gold and silver coins found behind Egyptian temple | Live Science](#)

World's Oldest Heart Found In Prehistoric Fish

[World's oldest heart found in prehistoric fish - BBC News](#)

3,300 Year-Old Burial Cave Found Intact At Popular Israeli Beach

[Frozen in time: 3,300-year-old burial cave from Ramses II era found at popular beach | The Times of Israel](#)

Saxon Burials Found Beneath Croydon Car Park

[Incredible discovery beneath Croydon car park dug up for 125 new flats - MyLondon](#)

Father And Sons Unearth Wars Of The Roses Treasure

[Harrogate: Father and sons unearth Wars of the Roses treasure - BBC News](#)

1,200 Year-Old Shipwreck With Fascinating Cargo Found Off Coast Of Israel

[Incredible Shipwreck With Fascinating Cargo Found 1,200 Years After Sinking In Holy Land - Ancient Pages](#)

Stone Age Structure Older Than Stonehenge Discovered In Czech Republic

[Stone Age Structure Older Than Pyramids and Stonehenge Discovered \(newsweek.com\)](#)

3,000 Year-Old Canoe Found In Lake Mendota, Wisconsin

[A second ancient canoe is found in Wisconsin — this time tracing back to 1000 B.C. | WJCT News](#)

Roman/Iron Age Anchor Found At North Sea Wind Farm On Display

[Roman/Iron Age anchor found at windfarm on display in Ipswich - BBC News](#)

Wreck Of Ship That Sent Iceberg Warning To Titanic Found In Irish Sea

[Titanic: Ship that sent iceberg warning found in Irish Sea - BBC News](#)

'Dream Discovery' Hailed As Sarcophagus Is Unearthed

[Archaeologists hail 'dream discovery' as sarcophagus is unearthed near Cairo | Archaeology | The Guardian](#)

The CBA Wessex October Newsletter is [HERE](#)

Fairly local items include a Celtic hoard due to be shown at the

[St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery in Lymington.](#)

Unfortunately the Springhead study weekend (5 & 6 November) has been cancelled

Ancient China - the early Zhou

The Shang dynasty had run its course and, as always throughout Chinese history, there were 'barbaric' pastoral peoples in the lands to the west desiring a piece of Chinese civilisation. In 1046 BCE it was the turn of the Zhou. They, like so many after them, were drawn in by the superior settled civilisation of the Shang, who they defeated at the Battle of Muye in 1046 BCE. Throughout the Zhou period of more than 800 years the Han Chinese expanded Han influence over a significant part of what is now modern China (no two maps entirely agree on the maximum extent of Han domination during the Zhou period, some putting it rather less than shown here).



The Zhou leader was, very loosely translated, the 'Son of Heaven'. For the Zhou, Heaven (T'ien) was a concept rather than a god or an actual place - a supreme and impersonal force, quite different from the gods of contemporary Mesopotamia or Egypt with their own personalities. The Zhou contended that Heaven (howsoever it was visualised) was intensely concerned with the morality of the people, especially the ruler. In 1046 BCE they maintained that they had won Heaven's approval to attack the Shang because of the degeneracy of the Shang regime, a perception that became known as 'the Mandate of Heaven'. For the Zhou all power on earth derived from Heaven, not from the Shang high god Shang Di, under whose guidance the Shang regime had 'become ineffective and degenerate'.

This idea of the Mandate of Heaven would persist, in theory at least, throughout Chinese history. As a dynasty became dissolute and corrupt it was said to have lost the Mandate of Heaven, giving licence for its overthrow. Whilst the Zhou Dynasty became the longest running of all Chinese dynasties (1046 to 221) BCE, the King was without political power for most of this period, preserving only some form of consolidating spiritual presence (I have used "king" here to avoid confusion with the later 'true' Emperors, who wielded political power over large domains, though many sources see "emperor" as more appropriate, even if that was a mostly ceremonial position for much of this period). Despite the Mandate of Heaven, the Zhou kings weren't overthrown but were retained mainly to oversee sacrifices to the ancestors; it was considered imperative to keep this tradition in place.

This lengthy Zhou era is divided into three periods: the "Western" Zhou (1045-771 BCE), the Spring and Autumn Period (771-481 BCE) and the Warring States Period (481-221 BCE). Dates do vary between sources; in fact, obtaining definitive details of places, events and dates in ancient China is fraught with difficulty, as it seems impossible to decide which source(s) are correct.

Legend has it that the Duke of Zhou, after overcoming the Shang, acted as regent for the legitimate Zhou king, Cheng, and that when Cheng reached his majority the Duke duly stepped aside rather than usurping the throne. This legend has given the Duke of Zhou an almost mythical reputation throughout Chinese history as a paragon of virtue, with the Early Zhou period being thought of as some kind of ideal state that should be emulated. However, in reality Cheng was probably pushed aside and assassinated in a palace coup! Notwithstanding that, the Zhou instigated the concept of the ruler as the Son of Heaven; not a god but some sort of conduit to Heaven.

The early Zhou kings parcelled out large chunks of land to relatives and other nobles, and a form of feudalism developed. During this period the whole of the Western Zhou world (which was not then as extensive as later) was subject to the king. His authority was as the Son of Heaven, based on and exercised through the proper performance of sacrifices to Heaven and to the ancestors. Warfare and hunting, together with sacrifice, appear to have been the main occupations of the ruling classes. Ritual (*Li*) and ceremonialism were of great importance. Sacrifices had to be performed in accordance with a rigid protocol overseen by the king himself. It seems that hunting was looked upon as a preparation for

warfare, but warfare, like sacrifices, was quite ritualised and controlled and, at this stage, it was not particularly extensive.

Throughout the early Zhou period there was considerable population growth and technological change, especially as the Iron Age was 'encroaching' from the west. This was coupled with a constant, and not necessarily peaceful, infiltration from the north and west of Turkic and Mongolian peoples. This all would have led to radical changes in early Zhou society and, it seems, a breakdown of the ritualised hunting, warfare and sacrificial systems.



The Zhou continued the Shang tradition of bronze casting (indeed the Shang and early Zhou periods are often considered to be China's 'Bronze Age'), particularly for ceremonial purposes. But Shang bronze casting was seldom surpassed; Zhou bronzes became ponderous and stylised, and were increasingly used in the early Zhou period for writing inscriptions and recording events to be reported to the ancestral spirits. Jade working in this period also continued Shang traditions, like this jade blade-shaped handle from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

There was, though, never a real mercantile economy in ancient China as there was in Mesopotamia; indeed merchants were generally reviled. The economy was always

dominated by agriculture. Ancient Chinese cities were not founded for economic reasons but rose up around the temples devoted to the ancestors. Many Early Zhou sites are known, despite often being buried under modern Chinese megacities. However, all these ancient Chinese cities were constructed predominantly in wood, so that relatively little remains to tell us of their architecture.

Perhaps the largest known Western Zhou site is that of Zhouyan, about 100km west of modern Xian, much of which isn't buried by modern buildings. Some think it was the original capital of the Zhou prior to their conquest of the Shang, but it certainly continued as an important city through the early Zhou period. Small scale archaeological excavations have been conducted there for at least a century, with larger digs since 1976 and a major campaign about 10 years ago. This is the best photograph I could find giving an overall view of part of the excavations, as relatively few clear photographs appear online.



Four large building complexes over 30mx60m in size were discovered, built on large rammed-earth platforms and interpreted as palaces. The remains include spaced wooden pillar uprights, but the exact form of above-ground construction isn't made clear, although roof tiles have been found. Within the complexes were buildings said to be temples to the ancestors, whilst one building complex is thought to have been the temple to the kings. Huge numbers of oracle bones on tortoise shells were found, used for divination and much like the Shang ones pictured in the previous article.

All the houses seem to have had rammed earth floors, with at least a dozen of the larger ones considered to be nobles' residences. A network of water channels or ditches was discovered but,

tantalisingly, it wasn't made clear whether this was for fresh water or waste. Workshops included ones for pottery, copper or bronze casting and bone working, suggesting large scale systematic production. In particular, many storage cellars containing bronze vessels have come to light accidentally over the last hundred years, as well as during planned excavations. Inscriptions on many of them are adding to Chinese archaeologists' knowledge of the period.



Several cemeteries from the period have also been discovered, with the amount and quality of the grave goods apparently marking out the resting places of the wealthier classes, like that shown left. Little survived of the skeleton but the type of items buried were products of the nearby workshops. Chariot burials are known, some including the remains of horses as with the one below.

With the conquest of the Shang, the centre of the Zhou's lands had moved east, as did the capital, although sources are confused both as to timing and the exact location. In fact, the location of the Zhou capital is never clear cut because of the weakening of central control with the proliferation of smaller 'statelets', and it seems that the court often moved between cities.



That weakening of the king's control intensified as the power of the feudal lords increased. King Xuan (827-782 BCE) tried to stem the flow. He was ruthless but effective and the state was consolidated. But, as so often seems to happen through history, the reign of an effective king is followed by a weak and ineffective one leading to chaos; China is certainly no exception. Xuan was succeeded by King You who, it was said, was greeted by a cacophony of Heavenly disgust! Nomadic incursions from the west continued, parts of the most westerly Zhou territory were lost, Zhouyan was captured and King You killed.

These major upheavals ended the Western Zhou era, with the start of the Eastern Zhou era marked by the move of the capital in 771 BCE. Sources, of course, vary – Luoyi (modern Luoyang, 320 km east of Xian) and Wangcheng (much further south) both being quoted by apparently authoritative sources. During the subsequent 'Spring and Autumn Period' (771-481 BCE) something like 150 statelets formed within the Zhou territory and minor wars between and beyond them proliferated. Unsurprisingly, warfare became far less ritualised and rather more widespread. At the same time, the Zhou kings became no more than a ritual conduit accountable to the feudal lords, retaining their ceremonial importance only because the perception continued that Heaven demanded the proper performance of sacrifice by the Son of Heaven. Sacrifices were, of course, intended to ensure the continued equilibrium between Heaven and Earth, but everyone could see that this was breaking down.

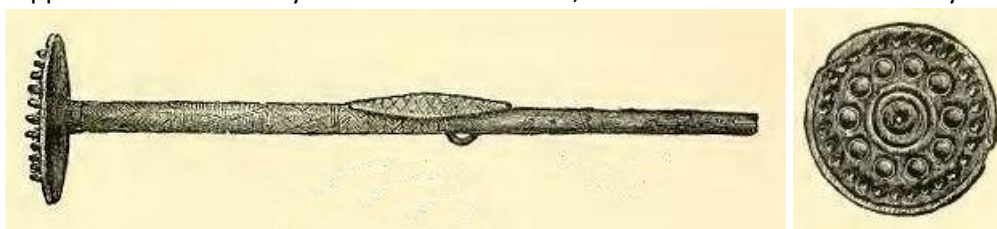
Continuing conflicts and the perception that the Ancestors and Heaven were not supremely powerful and did not have the ability to manage Humankind lead to two major developments. As is often the case during warfare, rapid changes in technology took place in many fields, but there were also major developments in philosophical and spiritual thought, accompanied by major artistic achievements resulting from the greater freedom of expression. We'll look at these in the next article.

Neil Meldrum/Geoff Taylor

From the Archives 4

Continuing with the 1881 volume of the Dorset Proceedings, it's a shame that some of the potentially useful papers have insufficient details of location or any illustration to understand exactly what is being described. For example, a find of many skeletons in a chalkpit "just outside Okeford Fitzpaine on the road to Turnworth", apparently laid in trenches cut into the chalk. It seems that these weren't uncommon finds in other chalkpits nearby, but details are insufficient to speculate on their age.

Rather better is the description of a bronze pin found "at Dorchester", suggested as a Roman hairpin, as illustrated below. Dimensions are given, with the pin originally thought to be about 23cm long before it was broken and the head about 3cm in diameter. It is suggested that the head may have been designed to be enamelled. Apparently, similar pins are "frequent in Irish collections", which rather suggests they're not Roman, whilst the care in decorating the stem seems unnecessary if it is to be hidden by hair. It was hoped that the pin could be placed in the 'New Museum at Dorchester', then close to completion (the Museum was originally established in 1845 and moved to its new building on the current site about 1881). The Museum appears not to have any of its collection online, so I wasn't able to check if they hold the pin, but I'd be grateful for any identification information.



An article by

William Barnes,

known for his poems in Dorset dialect (see January 2021 newsletter), tells of the Miz Maze formerly at Leigh, where the young men of the village would have a day of merry-making each year, perhaps on May Day. I had thought this might be the Leigh at the eastern edge of Wimborne, very close to my house, but it's actually about 5 miles southwest of Sherborne. Miz Maze is the name given to turf mazes in this region, now applied to those at Breamore, Dorset (shown), and St. Catherine's Hill overlooking Winchester. He goes on to tell of the 'Witches Corner' meeting place at Leigh Common, in the same area, but this actually relates to Stoke Trister, near Wincanton in Somerset.



There is another article by Barnes which, despite his then reputation for considerable knowledge of the past, rather adds to a view that much of it was fanciful or under-researched. This looks at "the so-called Castle" at Cranborne, where he declares that the smaller mound on the top of the larger earthwork was the seat of the judge, perhaps for the Hundred of Cranborne, tracing it back under Bardic law to Druidic traditions. Invoking a Druidic past is the first warning sign, though it is entirely possible that the space at the top of the mound was used as an early meeting place or court, as I was once told is evidenced in the Edmondsham Estate archives. However, the mound on the top actually covers the burial of 2 favourite horses earlier in the 19th century. Whilst the castle is almost certainly a motte and bailey, and is scheduled as such, it quite possibly obscures or uses earlier earthworks. However, as far as I can tell, no serious archaeological investigations have been done there.



The final piece from volume IV is this photograph of, presumably Iron Age, gold artefacts found 1808-1828 near Hilton on the Milton Abbey Estate. The convex disk is 10.5cm across and hollow, the rest solid; they weigh about 370gm in total. Rescued from a silversmith to whom the finder had sold them, they were owned by the Damer family and seem to have gone to Ireland.

Geoff Taylor

View from Above No. 47: Stoney Littleton Long Barrow

*Photographs by
Sue Newman
and Jo Crane*



Stoney Littleton Long Barrow is near Wellow in Somerset, less than 5 miles south of Bath. According to the English Heritage site [here](#), which gives information on visiting the long barrow, this is “one of the country’s finest accessible examples of a Neolithic chambered tomb”.

The barrow is of the ‘Cotswold-Severn’ type, 30m long and 12.5m wide at the entrance end, with a narrow internal passage 13m long. The mound is retained by dry-stone walling and was originally much taller than the current 2m, and the 3m wide quarry ditch is now filled in. The internal passage is flanked by three pairs of small burial chambers, with a seventh at the end. Although it is 1.8m high at the entrance, the roof slopes and is only 1.2m high at the far end.

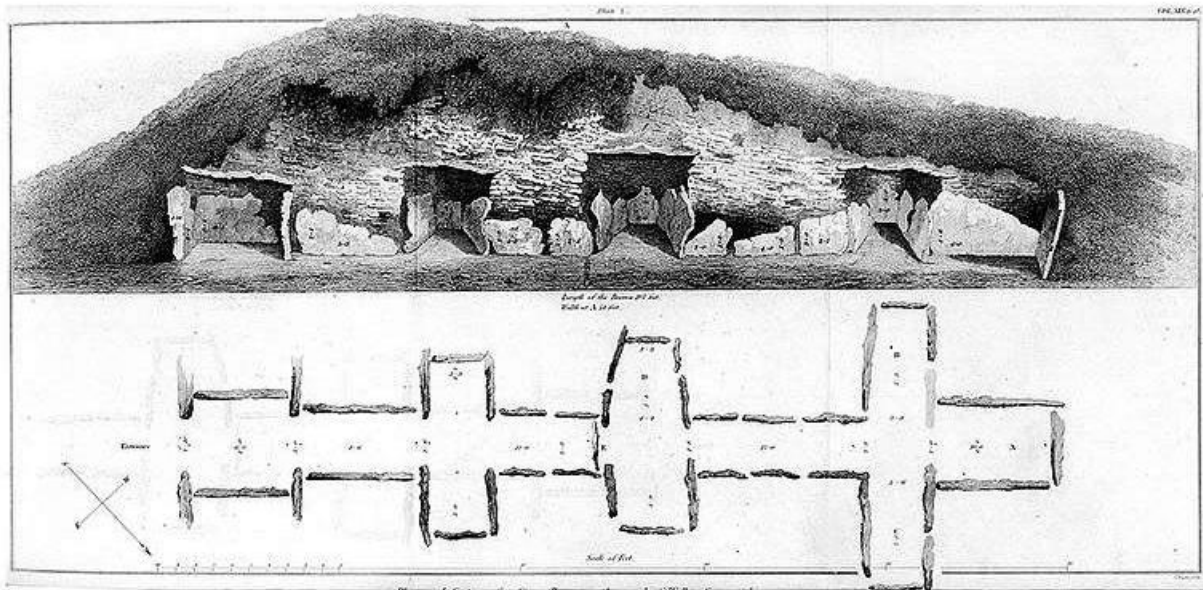
The large stone slab forming the left-hand (western) jamb at the entrance has a prominent ammonite fossil about 30cm in diameter, perhaps related to a perception of healing or magical powers. An inscribed stone tablet, most of which is now illegible, was set up to the right of the entrance



to record restoration work in 1857-8 by Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society.

Whilst earlier digging and damage is entirely likely, the first known was by a local farmer in about 1760, quarrying into the top of the mound for stone for road repairs. Sir Richard Colt Hoare excavated the interior in 1821, along with the local rector. Their excavation was, of course, not to modern standards, and only took 2 days with 5 people of whom 2 or 3 ‘gentlemen’ probably did little. They did, however, record what was found and published their work in the journal *Archaeologia*, including the plan and

section below. They found numerous bone fragments, apparently removed from the chambers, as well as pottery and cremated remains. Some of their finds are now in the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.



The Ministry of Work did some restoration in 1938, and there have been several subsequent interventions by Cotswold Archaeology since 1995, as part of English Heritage's conservation programme. They have found more bone and Neolithic tools, as well as some 3rd or 4th century Roman pottery that is likely to be intrusive from antiquarian excavations. The base of outer retaining walls appears to have originally been below current ground level, but the higher parts look to have been rebuilt in the 1850s. No carbon dating has been done for this long barrow, so it is dated based on the results for other Cotswold-Severn barrows at 3750-3400 BC.

Geoff Taylor/ Jo Crane

The Gate of Hell

This, surprisingly, isn't about the Black Sabbath song *Gates of Hell*, nor even the so-called Gateway to Hell in the Karakum Desert, Turkmenistan, as shown. That was said to have been produced in 1971 when a Soviet drilling rig accidentally tapped into a massive natural gas chamber, then lit it to stop the methane escaping into the atmosphere, thinking it would only burn for weeks. Locals say that the 69m diameter sink hole was formed in the 1960s and not lit for a couple of decades, but documentary evidence is classified. Also see the update below!



No, this is about the (singular) Gate of Hell at the ancient city of Hierapolis in Turkey. Hierapolis is an ancient Greek city built around hot springs in south-western Anatolia. The origins of settlement there are somewhat obscure, though a temple appears to have been built around the 7th century BC by the Phrygians and formed the centre of the later city. Hierapolis, known from the name on coins minted there, was founded as a thermal spa in the 2nd century BC under the Seleucid Empire, a Greek state in western Asia. It's original name may

have related to its temple, or *hieron*, but it was changed at some point to Hierapolis or 'holy city'. The kingdom of Attalus III, in which Hierapolis stood, was bequeathed to the Romans in 133 BC and became part of the Roman province of Asia

The hot springs for which the city was founded were used by doctors, and the city became a famous healing place. Despite a major earthquake in AD17 that destroyed much of the city, it was rebuilt. After an even more severe earthquake in AD60 the city was rebuilt in the Roman style with support from imperial funds. The city's fame and attractions are shown by the number of emperors known to have visited, including Hadrian and Septimius Severus, with Valens the last known in AD 370. The city grew to perhaps 100,000 inhabitants and became increasingly wealthy. It was an important early Christian centre, with the apostle Philip martyred there in AD 80 and his tomb thought to have been found in 2011. It grew in religious importance after the Roman Empire converted to Christianity, with a high-ranking bishop and the Roman baths converted to a basilica. However, Hierapolis was devastated by Persian armies in the 7th century and then by another destructive earthquake.



It grew in religious importance after the Roman Empire converted to Christianity, with a high-ranking bishop and the Roman baths converted to a basilica. However, Hierapolis was devastated by Persian armies in the 7th century and then by another destructive earthquake.



The hot springs are probably the most famous part of the city now, rediscovered by travellers in the 20th century and named Pamukkale ("cotton castle"). Whilst that did mean that modern tourists rediscovered the ancient city, it also led to some destruction as modern hotels were built among the remains, with their pools making use of the hot water. These have now been removed except for one pool that can still be used. The 'castle' itself – limestone-sided natural pools produced by the calcite-rich water flowing down a hillside – remains a beautiful sight.

The 'Gate of Hell' relates to part of the Temple of Apollo, built on the site of the early Phrygian temple above. Although the temple was to 'top god' Apollo, here he was linked to the ancient Anatolian sun god Lairbenos, and the site also had shrines to Cybele (the Anatolian mother goddess), Artemis, Pluto (god of the underworld) and Poseidon. Little remains of the temple following earthquakes and other destruction, though some restoration has been done. The temple platform survives, apparently from the late Hellenistic construction, as well as the marble floor of the smaller Roman reconstruction in the 3rd century, which re-used earlier stonework now littered around the site.



The temple was built over a natural fault called the Plutonium, a common approach for temples to Apollo, as at Delphi, with the fault or emanations from it used in ceremonies. The small cave of the Plutonium was where Cybele met with Apollo and it was shown that it could only be entered safely by the priests of Cybele; proof, of course, of the presence of the god. When the area was excavated by Turkish and Italian archaeologists in 2011, amongst the finds was a statue of Cerberus – the three-headed dog that guards the entrance to the

underworld, or hell, in Greek mythology.



There are different stories about the ceremonial use of the Plutonium, though all give a similar picture, one apparently written about by ancient authors such as Strabo and Cassius Dio. Beyond the now blocked entrance, as shown, is a small chamber big enough for one person and a deep cleft in the rock where fast-flowing water releases a noxious gas. In front of the entrance was a large enclosed area, also said to be deadly to the uninitiated. Priests would enter that with sacrificial animals which soon died or, in one version, sell small animals or birds to visitors to be taken in and perish.

As found by intrepid Italian and German archaeologists in the last few years, the cause is carbon dioxide emanating from the cleft. Being heavier than air, this tends to settle to lower ground or hollows, so that the priests could tell where was safe, hold their breath or stand above what smaller creatures were breathing. Larger sacrificial animals may have had their heads held down until, sadly, they suffocated. Even now, birds attracted to the heat in the cave sometimes suffer the same fate.

This proved a lucrative business for the priests, as did the charges to ask questions of the oracle of Pluto. The coming of Christianity ended this and the archaeologists believe the entrance was blocked in the 4th century, though there is evidence of occasional visitors until the shrine was destroyed by an earthquake in the 6th century.

Update from BBC website on 8th January 2022 (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-59920221>)

Turkmenistan's president has ordered the extinguishing of the country's 'Gateway to Hell'. Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov wants it put out for environmental and health reasons, as well as part of efforts to increase gas exports, despite it being one of Turkmenistan's most popular tourist attractions, which he officially renamed 'Shining of Karakum' in 2018.

"We are losing valuable natural resources for which we could get significant profits and use them for improving the well-being of our people," the president said in televised remarks. He instructed officials to "find a solution to extinguish the fire". There have been numerous attempts to end the fire, including in 2010 when Mr Berdymukhamedov also ordered experts to find a way to put out the flames.

As far as I can find out, despite various organisations offering to help, they are no nearer to extinguishing the flames today. As one person said – even if you can put out the fire, hot embers will likely re-ignite it.

Geoff Taylor

EDAS PROGRAMME

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

2022			
Wed 12th October	Lecture	Helen Farr	Marine Archaeology in the Black Sea
Wed 9th November	Lecture	Richard Hobbs	Hinton St Mary Mosaic: Fieldwork & excavations
Wed 14th December	Lecture	Mike Gill	Redefining the Neolithic Map: Recent work on Cranborne Chase and Avon Valley long barrows
2023			
Wed 11th January	Lecture	Julian Richards	The last wild Britain: the Mesolithic people at Springhead
Wed 8th February	Lecture	Neil Meldrum	Ancient China
Wed 8th March	AGM & lecture	To be announced	Subject tbd – recent EDAS work
Wed 12th April	Lecture	Peter Cox	40 years of archaeology in Dorset
Wed 10th May	Lecture	Clare Randall	The manor of Putton and the potential of medieval archaeology in Dorset

DISTRICT DIARY

AVAS have had to change their meeting venue, and restricted availability of dates at the new venue unfortunately meant that meetings now clash with the Blandford Group.

Further speaker information for AVAS will be included once available.

Some of the Blandford Group's meeting details are provisional – watch this space!

2022			
Wed 19th October	Mapping time in the Purbecks – 11 th to 20 th centuries	Wareham Society	Mary Sparks
Thu 20th October	Wytch Farm- what plants tell us about an archaeological site	AVAS	Siggy Osborne
Thu 20th October	The Real Roman Britain: A skeletal and isotopic analysis of rural and urban populations	Blandford Society	Emma Van der Velden
Wed 16th November	Dorset folklore and traditional tales from the oral tradition	Wareham Society	Tim Laycock
Thu 17th November	Islands of Stone: Neolithic crannogs in the Outer Hebrides	AVAS	Dr Stephanie Blankshein
Thu 17th November	Experimental Archaeology at Wytch Farm	Blandford Society	Derek Pitman
Wed 7th December	The last wild Britain: Mesolithic people at Springhead	Wareham Society	Julian Richards
2023			
Wed 18th January	Meyer: a rebel with a cause	Wareham Society	Graham Knott

Thu 19th January	Bronze Age - Iron Age houses	Blandford Society	Olivia Britter
Wed 15th February	Rockbourne Roman Villa	Wareham Society	John Smith
Thu 16th February	Predicting the location of Neolithic Sites	Blandford Society	Alex
Wed 15th March	Update on Hadrian's Wall	Wareham Society	Mark Corney
Thu 16th March	Medieval	Blandford Society	Cindy
Wed 19th April	What's in a name? A history of Wareham through street names	Wareham Society	Lilian Ladle
Thu 20th April	The Congresbury Kiln Assemblage.	AVAS	Amy Thorp
Thu 20th April	Archaeology and Mental Health	Blandford Society	Megan Russel
Wed 17th May	Dorset Churches	Wareham Society	Gordon Le Pard

Archaeology Societies

- **Avon Valley Archaeological Society:** <http://www.avas.org.uk/>
Meetings at Ibsley Village Hall, BH24 3NL (<https://ibsleyhall.co.uk/>), 7:30pm 3rd Thursday of month except June, July & August. Visitors £3.50; membership £10 pa.
- **Blandford Museum Archaeology Group:** <https://blandfordtownmuseum.org.uk/groups-and-projects/archaeology-group/>
Meetings normally 7:30pm 3rd Thursday of each month September to May at Blandford Parish Centre, The Tabernacle, DT11 7DW. 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](#), 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.