

Founded 1983

East Dorset Antiquarian Society

Charity No: 1171828

www.dorset-archaeology.org.uk

mail@dorset-archaeology.org.uk



<https://www.facebook.com/dorset.archaeology>

Edited by Geoff Taylor, email: geoffnsue@hotmail.co.uk, Tel: 01202 840166
224 Leigh Road, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 2BZ

NEWSLETTER – March 2023

As our meeting this month, the AGM, is the earliest we could have a 2nd Wednesday, this newsletter is also earlier than usual. What seemed like a bit of a rush towards the end of February – AGM preparations, getting this newsletter ready, and so on – made me wonder why it's a short month. Hence the short article **Why is February the shortest month?** further down. Space, spacing and my wish to make this introduction read reasonably coherently means the articles are definitely not in the order I'm announcing them.

Many thanks to EDAS member Neil Meldrum for the EDAS lecture in February. Thanks also to him for both his slides and comprehensive notes, which made writing the summary, **Ancient China**, much easier.

The next meeting is, of course, the Annual General Meeting on the 8th of March. You'll have had the agenda and reports a while ago, with an invitation to apply for places on the committee – there is still time, right up to the elections.

Of course, we also want to see you there, if only to listen to Andrew's talk on the origins of Dorset. And we hope arrangements can be made in time to reinstate the refreshment break, after comments from several people who missed it. If so, there will be no charge.

EDAS is 40 this year, as won't have escaped you, and Dorset features in our celebrations from when we asked for items that characterised Dorset for you. Vanessa, with a bit of help from me, has put together our choice in the summary: **EDAS 40th Anniversary – Dorset in 40 Items**. We'll take four items and describe them in a bit more detail each month, with the first four here:

Badbury Rings, The Jurassic Coast, Cranborne Chase and D-Day Dorset

We'll also celebrate at an evening garden party at the Museum of East Dorset, Saturday 20th May 6:00-8:30. More details to follow. Sadly, as briefly announced last month, Tim Schadla-Hall won't be able to join us. Andrew has kindly provided an '**In Memoriam**' – an appreciation of Tim's contributions to EDAS and to archaeology.

Having received some old EDAS newsletters and other items, including information from 1983, I was interested to see what our subscriptions have been in the past. When the society started in 1983 we charged £3pa for individuals and £5 for a family/couple. After 10 years that was increased to £6.50 and £10, with another change following quite quickly by, at the latest, 1999.

That was when subscriptions were set at the current level of £8.50 and £12.00, so almost 25 years with the rates unchanged. Your subscriptions are, of course, due on 1st April (except for those joining from 1st January), but what excellent value for money!

Andrew has also provided the note about the **Current Archaeology Awards**, where Lilian was one of just 3 nominations for Archaeologist of the Year.

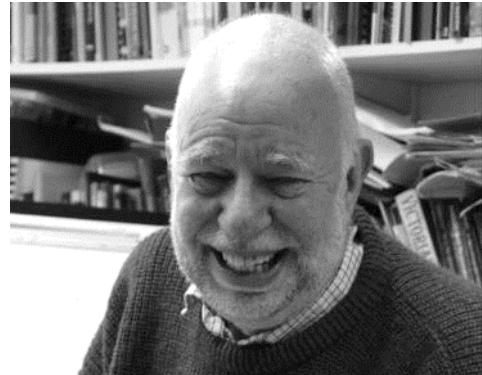
There's **From the Archives 8** in this edition. Alan continues to provide the **Weblinks** (no. 55) and **Weblink highlights**, and we have **View from Above – North Poortton** (no. 52), inspired by Jo Crane and Sue Newman. I'm grateful to them and to everyone else who contributes to the newsletters.

As ever, the **EDAS Programme** and **District Diary** complete the newsletter; as these get shorter towards the summer there is, of course, a bit more space I can fill.

Geoff Taylor

In Memoriam: Tim Schadla-Hall, 1947-2023

We are sad to announce that Tim Schadla-Hall passed away on 9th January after a long illness. Tim had a special interest in promoting public archaeology and was a major influence on the founder members of EDAS, who attended courses he ran for the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). He provided encouragement and advice when they decided to set up the society in 1983. Tim was made an honorary member and continued an involvement with the society over the years.



I will always remember his kind words and encouragement when I became Chair of the society. He continued to provide positive feedback about our projects and regularly offered praise to Geoff about the content of the monthly newsletter. Even though, for several years, he had been battling with illness, in April 2017 he was prepared to travel some distance to be guest speaker for the annual EDAS lecture held at Bournemouth University. As always, he gave a provocative and humorous talk, this time in praise of field work entitled "The pick and shovel is the only true discoverer of the past", which was well received by an enthusiastic audience of members, students and lecturers.

Tim attended St Catherine's College, Cambridge, where he studied geography, but at the age of 12 he had discovered the thrill of excavation and he soon began a career in archaeology, working on a number of important sites. He eventually became director of Leicestershire County Museum Service and oversaw community archaeology programmes. Tim joined the Institute of Archaeology at University College, London in 1998 as a Lecturer, later promoted to Reader, where he taught public archaeology and museum management, and helped create the international journal *Public Archaeology*. Tim continued to undertake archaeological fieldwork, most notably at Star Carr, and he played a major role in several heritage-centred organisations, including the Royal Naval Submarine Museum.

Tim was a strident and effective campaigner; it is said that he was always trying to make the world a better place. He will be missed.

Andrew Morgan

CURRENT Archaeology AWARDS

We offer our congratulations to David Jacques who has won this year's prestigious **Archaeologist of the Year 2023**. David is an old friend of the society, and you may recall the excellent lecture he gave to EDAS in September 2018.

Since 2005, David has been project director at Blick Mead excavations, the oldest and longest-used occupation site in the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. The excavation began as one long weekend dig a year, on a shoestring budget with the help of the local community and other volunteers, but has since become a multi-university research effort, which uses the latest technology to address important new questions about the origins of the Stonehenge landscape. The importance to the local community is symbolised by the building of Amesbury History Centre. As always the work has been very much a team effort, but David's colleagues see him as the lynchpin and catalyst behind the collective strength of the project.



We were very proud that our own Lilian Ladle had also been nominated, in recognition of her outstanding contributions to archaeology in Dorset. That includes the 13-year excavation at the multi-period site of Bestwall Quarry, near Wareham, publishing monographs in 2009 and 2012. The EDAS excavation of a complex site at Football Field, Worth Matravers, was completed and published in 2018. In 2012, she initiated, directed, and has recently published the results of another EDAS project, the Druce Farm Roman Villa excavation. Fieldwork on all sites, and much of the post-excavation work, was undertaken by volunteers and the sites were regularly opened to the public. Lilian was awarded the MBE for services to archaeology in 2008 and was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 2021. She is a Visiting Fellow in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at Bournemouth University.

Commiserations to Lilian.

Andrew Morgan

EDAS 40th Anniversary – Dorset in 40 Items

Thank you to all those who submitted Dorset items in celebration of our 40th anniversary, and here's the 40 that we chose. They aren't in any order of ranking as that seemed a step too far – just 40 items that represent Dorset to EDAS members. We'll do short articles on each item over the next year; the first 4 are below.



Apologies if something you submitted didn't appear. There are also, perhaps, a few surprising omissions from the list. If you think there is something that should be added please do let us know; tell us why and give us at least enough information to provide a similar summary to

these here. If you want to suggest an item yours should replace please do, and a photo would be helpful. No promises that we'll accept that, but we will publish what we receive.

Vanessa Joseph/Geoff Taylor

Badbury Rings, Wimborne: This Iron Age hillfort encompasses so much of our early history, from Bronze Age barrows to Roman ‘spaghetti junction’ of meeting roads, even perhaps ‘Dark Ages’ Mount Badon?

The Jurassic Coast: Mostly in Dorset, 96 miles long and including 185 million years of Earth’s history – a geological marvel.

D-Day Dorset: Dorset has many significant WWII sites, but D-Day holds a particular significance as the front line of the build-up, the coastline being used for rehearsals and the fleet being assembled off our coast.

Cranborne Chase: It’s difficult to choose from Dorset’s landscapes, but the sheer number of ancient sites and continued settlement and activity made this the choice.



Jadeite axe, Newton Peverill: Hundreds of hours to make this early Neolithic object of perfection; prehistoric people understood quality and beauty.

Verwood pottery, Verwood/East Dorset: The main Dorset pottery from the medieval period to its decline in the 20th century, producing a wide range of distinctively glazed pots.

Martin Green Museum, Sixpenny Handley: An Aladdin’s cave of wonderment, stuffed full of fabulous, mostly prehistoric, treasures.

Mary Anning, Lyme Regis: A pioneering but unsung palaeontologist and fossil collector in the mid-19th century. Her lifetime was a constellation of firsts, yet she was rarely credited for her work.

St Aldhelm’s Chapel, Worth Matravers: A modest and enigmatic Norman building named for the great 7th century Wessex polymath and bishop.

St Augustine's Well, Cerne Abbas: Originally St. Edwold’s well in the 7th century, renamed to Augustine in the 11th century, and the only holy well in Dorset to have had a shrine.

History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset: Hutchins’ immense work, first published in 1774 after his death, remains a valuable reference work to this day.

Mount Pleasant henge, near Dorchester: One of the few huge, or ‘super’, Neolithic henges, like Durrington Walls, at about 370x320m.

Early Christian cemetery, Worth Matravers: Internationally important post-Roman Christian cemetery excavated by EDAS.

Red finger (sign) posts: Dorset has around 700 traditional signposts, but 4 are red with possible links to prisoner movements and transportation to Australia.

Lake Farm Roman Fortress, Wimborne: Clearly relating to the Roman conquest of Dorset, a nationally and internationally important site because of the limited subsequent disturbance.

TB skeleton, Tarrant Hinton: This Iron Age skeleton, displayed at the Museum of East Dorset, provides the earliest evidence of TB in Britain.

Wareham Walls, Wareham: Not the only Anglo-Saxon burh in Dorset, but the well-preserved walls are a distinctive and visible reminder.

Maumbury Rings, Dorchester: The only Roman amphitheatre in Dorset, but a lot of other history from Neolithic henge to 17th century place of execution.

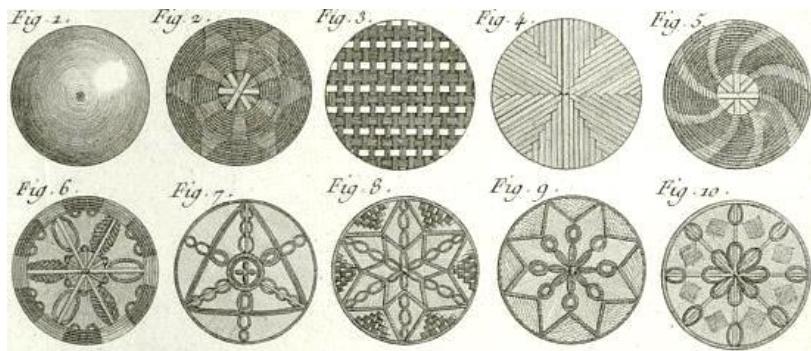


Hardy Monument, near Portesham: Built in 1844 in the shape of a ‘spyglass’ to honour Vice-Admiral Hardy, flag captain of Admiral Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar.

Port and Settlement, Hengistbury Head: So much could be said about Hengistbury from the Palaeolithic onwards, but amphorae found there show the importance of the Iron Age port – evidence for overseas trade and sophisticated tastes.

Dorset buttons, Shaftesbury/East

Dorset: An important local, home-working industry for over 200 years, but a casualty of the Industrial Revolution.



Victoria Hall, Dorchester Museum:

A wonderful space of raw engineering at Dorset Museum, epitomising Victorian building and enhanced by Roman mosaics.

Folding knife, Druce Farm Roman Villa: One of the most interesting things found by EDAS at Druce Farm, a Roman folding knife with a lion-themed bone handle.

Bronze gold-working anvil, Tarrant Valley: A sophisticated Bronze Age tool; a workshop in your hand. Used to make exquisite objects so long ago (e.g. perhaps the lunula found nearby).

Wimborne Minster, Wimborne: Probably originating in or before Alfred’s time, the burial place of kings with an ancient astronomical clock and chained library.

The Cobb, Lyme Regis: An iconic stone breakwater and jetty, originally 14th century or earlier, internationally famous and with literary and cinematic connections.

Maiden Castle, near Dorchester: Highly visible, and one of the largest and most complex Iron Age hillforts in Europe, with a Roman temple inside.

Max Gate, Dorchester: The house of Thomas Hardy, Dorset’s most famous literary son, which also reveals much about life in late Victorian/ Edwardian Dorset.

Cerne Giant, Cerne Abbas: Somewhat iconic of Dorset being pleased to welcome you, but its origins and purpose remain uncertain.

Dorset Cursus: The Neolithic cursus, actually two end to end and 10km long, shows evidence of complex organisation, planning and communal effort.

Wall paintings, Tarrant Crawford Church: The painted scenes inside medieval churches illustrate the importance of the church then and the means of teaching biblical stories, and giving moral instruction, to mostly illiterate congregations.

South-East Dorset Black Burnished ware, Poole Harbour/Wareham: Hand-made pottery from the Durotriges in the Iron Age, through to a massively expanded distribution in the Roman period. An early success story for Dorset commerce.

Cross Slab, Wimborne All Hallows: Found in an EDAS excavation; this medieval grave marker has a design distinctive of the Purbeck school of carvers for this important industry.

Ridgeway Hill, Weymouth: A Viking burial pit from the late 10th/early 11th century with 54 skeletons, probably the crew of a longship and a reminder of why burhs were needed.

Dorset’s unusual place names: England isn’t short of place names that appear unusual, funny or even rude, but Dorset seems particularly blessed, e.g. Tincleton, Ryme Intrinseca, Melbury Bubb and Pulham Down

Old Harry Rocks, Studland: Right at the end of the Jurassic coast, but here it’s a story of sea level rise and erosion after the last Ice Age.

Corfe Castle, Corfe: A very long and important history from the Normans taking over a Saxon royal site to sieges in both Civil Wars.



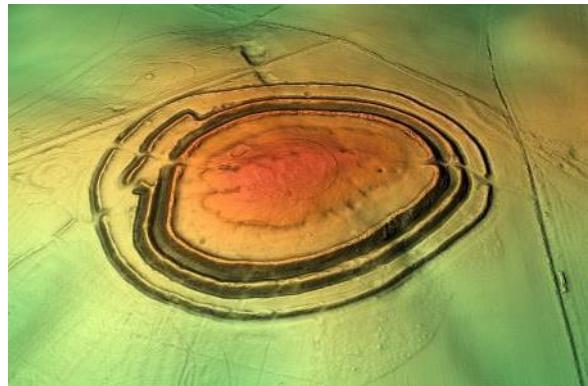
Log boat, Poole Harbour: Carved from a single oak around 300 BC, at 10m long this is the largest log boat found in southern Britain.

Henge and church, Knowlton: A Norman church built within a Neolithic henge, symbolising the transition from pagan to Christian.

Shapwick Monster, Shapwick: Villagers of Shapwick in 1706 thought that a crab, left on the road, was a devil or monster. Even at this late date this illustrates the insularity of villagers who lived not that far from the sea.

Badbury Rings (GT)

It's appropriate that this is the first short piece on our '40 items for the 40th anniversary of EDAS' as, of course, it's been our logo since the start – drawn by Len Norris. Badbury has appeared in numerous newsletters, not least the October 2021 one that recorded the 2004 EDAS excavation there. It's impossible to cover the history and archaeology at, and around, this Iron Age hillfort in a short piece, with Bronze Age burial mounds nearby as well as the complex junction of Roman roads. A Romano-Celtic temple lies just to the west, in use from the 1st-5th century according to the excavator.



Finds suggest post-Roman occupation in the 5th and 6th centuries, not least a bronze ring found on an early post-Roman chalk floor. This may add credence to the common identification of Badbury (along with Bath) as the site of the Battle of Mount Badon in the late 5th or early 6th century. First recorded by Gildas in the 6th century, and later woven into Arthurian legend, this was said to have halted the Saxons' westward advance for a generation or more. There certainly was an army there in 899, when Edward the Elder (son of Alfred the Great) came to challenge Æthelwold (Alfred's nephew), holed up in Wimborne, for the throne. Æthelwold ran away!

The Jurassic Coast (VJ)

The Jurassic Coast's 95-mile span includes the distinct geographic regions of East Devon, West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland and Purbeck. It is a hugely diverse and beautiful landscape with geology of global importance. In 2001, the Jurassic Coast was inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO for the Outstanding Universal Value of its rocks, fossils, and landforms.



This is the only place on Earth where rocks from the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods can be seen in one place, representing 185 million years of Earth's history. Within these rocks are countless stories of continents colliding, landscapes being formed and shaped by time and tide, and extraordinary creatures living, dying and evolving across millions of years.

The iconic Durdle Door

One of the best ways to appreciate of the Jurassic Coast is on foot. The 95 miles from Exmouth to Old Harry Rocks make up part of the South West Coast Path National Trail and include natural wonders such

as Chesil Beach, Lulworth Cove and Durdle Door.

Museums and Visitor Centres along the way, known collectively as the ‘String of Pearls’, help to unite the World Heritage Site and its towns and villages into a single coherent story.

Whether you are a geology lover, a fossil hunter or a walker, you can't help feeling proud of what we have just on our doorstep. In the author's case, some of these places featured in her O-level physical geography textbook and fuelled a lifelong love of geology and world travel.



D-Day Dorset (GT)

Dorset was particularly significant for the D-Day invasion, before, during and after 6th June 1944. Tyneham village is well known and a poignant reminder of one sort of sacrifice, after it was ‘temporarily’ abandoned in late December 1943, after only 4 weeks’ notice, to provide firing ranges for D-Day training. The beaches all along the coast were in use for training, with ‘Exercise Smash’ in Studland Bay perhaps the most famous. Six weeks before the invasion, King George VI, General Eisenhower and Winston Churchill watched from the bunker called Fort Henry as a practice run, using live ammunition, took place. Sadly, 6 of the Valentine tanks, designed to be able to float, sank before reaching the beach; 2 remain underwater. The bunker can still be visited and has signage describing these events.

In the build-up to D-Day, vast amounts of vehicles, weaponry and supplies built up in the fields and woods of Dorset, with many militarised areas out of bounds to the locals. Portland, Weymouth and Poole Harbour were crowded with part of the D-Day fleet, which embarked American soldiers for the invasion itself. They were, perhaps, half of the 54,000 Americans landed on the first day, but the unluckiest half as all those sailing from Dorset were destined for Omaha Beach, which suffered the worst casualties. Many were, no doubt, treated at the 72 acre hospital site in the grounds of Kingston Lacy, one of three US Army hospitals set up in East Dorset alone.



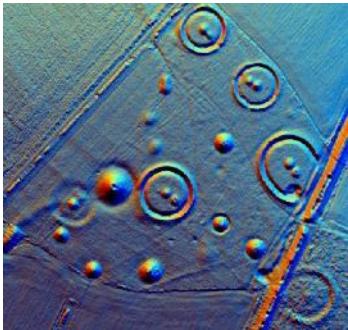
Cranborne Chase (VJ)

Geographically, Cranborne Chase is a chalk plateau that straddles the counties of Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire. The region was described by Thomas Hardy as “the oldest wood in England”. It was a royal hunting ground from at least Norman times. Many archaeological monuments have survived within the area thanks to the forest laws that controlled land use, and protected animals and landscape, until 1828.

The Chase boasts a rare combination of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age sites (e.g. Wor Barrow, Oakley Down barrow



cemetery – shown here in Jo Crane & Sue Newman’s photograph and a LIDAR image); the Dorset Cursus, which runs for over nine kilometres; and a significant number and range of henge monuments. It was here that Augustus Pitt Rivers developed what is now regarded as modern archaeological fieldwork during the later 19th century. Indeed, archaeological investigations have continued to the present day.



Other important remains include a variety of enclosures, settlements, field systems and linear boundaries which date throughout prehistory and into the Romano-British and medieval periods. Ackling Dyke, part of the Roman road that linked Badbury Rings with Old Sarum, crosses the area. The great defensive feature of Bokerley Dyke might have been the edge of the settlement area of the Durotriges, Dorset’s local Iron Age tribe.

Martin Green’s ‘Down Farm’ includes an excavated edge of the Dorset Cursus, a rare pond barrow, Mesolithic burials and a field shaft.

Cranborne Chase became the first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the country to be designated in its entirety as an International Dark Sky Reserve in 2019.

Weblink Highlights February 2023

After two months of fewer than usual items to report, this month sees a return to a more healthy crop of weblinks.

For those interested in the item about Vikings bringing their own horses and dogs to Britain, Cat Jarman was interviewed about this on the radio 4 'Today' programme on 2/2/23 at about 8.40 if you want to find it on BBC 'Sounds'.

I have included the item about lost Roman roads although it is a book review rather than an item about a new discovery. However, it is (reputedly) an interesting insight into the lesser known Roman roads and how they have disappeared over time.

I am constantly amazed at the evident lack of proof reading of internet items, particularly the headlines. This month featured two (to me) astonishing examples that would not take either a genius or subject expert to spot. The first appeared in the 'Metro' piece about the pendant linked to Catherine of Aragon, referring to her husband as Henry VIII!!

The second surfaced in the 'Evening Standard' item about the British Museum using CIA Cold War photos to find a long lost palace in Iraq. The headline and first paragraph refer to these as from a spy plane, but further down they then correctly refer to a spy satellite from the CIA Corona program. It makes you wonder how many other 'editorial errors' are lurking in internet items.

Alan Dedden

February Weblinks - No. 55

8ft Iron Sword Discovered In 4th Century Japanese Burial Mound [here](#)

Gas Meter Beneath Vape Shop Reveals 800 Year Old Priory Crypt [here](#)

Horses And Dogs Sailed With Vikings To Britain [here](#)

The Road - A Story Of Romans And Ways To The Past By Christopher Hadley [here](#)

Detectorist's Find Of Pendant Linked To Henry VIII And Catherine Of Aragon [here](#)

Forgotten 'Stonehenge Of The North' Gifted To The Nation [here](#)

'Oldest Animal Fossil' That Rewrote India's History Actually Recently Decayed Beehive [here](#)

Church Of England Seeks New Reliquary For Earliest Remains Of An English Saint [here](#)

Battle Site Of 'Great Revolt' Recorded On The Rosetta Stone Unearthed In Egypt [here](#)

Rare Fish From The Mesozoic Era Found Off The East Coast Of The US [here](#)

Gold Coins Found By Detectorist Identified As Rare Edward III Nobles [here](#)

'Probable' Roman Road And Bronze Age Houses Found In Devon [here](#)

Reconstruction Of Ancient Nabataean Woman's Face To Be Displayed In Saudi Arabia [here](#)

Ancient Statue Of Hercules Discovered During Sewage Repair Work In Rome [here](#)

Fears For Ancient Sites After Turkish Earthquake [here](#)

Mary Queen Of Scots Secret Code Broken After 430 Years [here](#)

Rare Ancient Gold Bead Found In Jerusalem [here](#)



Discovery Of 3m Year-Old Stone Tools Sparks Prehistoric Whodunnit [here](#)

5,000 Year Old Tavern Excavated In Iraq [here](#)

Giant Meat-Eating Dinosaur Footprint Is Largest Found In Yorkshire [here](#)

Oldest Prayer Beads Found In England To Go On Display At Lindisfarne Priory [here](#)

Newport Ship Set To Be Restored After 20 Years Of Painstaking Work [here](#)

Cold War Spy Satellite Photos Used To Discover Lost Palaces In Iraqi Desert [here](#)

Mystery Sketch Is Rare Michelangelo Draft For Sistine Chapel [here](#)

'Ghost Tunnels Should Be Preserved' At Portland High Angle Battery [here](#)

Treasure Definition May Be Broadened In Favour Of Museums [here](#)

Wiltshire Detectorist Finds Hoard Of England's 'Worst Ever' Coins [here](#)

Stolen Angkorian Crown Jewellery Resurfaces In London [here](#)

Stunning Reconstruction Reveals 'Lonely Boy' Who Died Norwegian Cave 8,300 Years Ago [here](#)

4,500 Year-Old Sumerian Temple Discovered In Iraq [here](#)

Exhibition Of Shipwreck Of 'The Gloucester' Opens At Norwich Castle [here](#)

See also [this site](#) for video of wreck

The Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership Newsletter for February is [here](#); sorry for the delay. Particular news is that their LIDAR Portal has now been launched to volunteers; a step closer to being publicly available.

And the CBA Wessex newsletter for March is [here](#)

Events at the Museum of East Dorset, Wimborne

The Treasure Act and the Portable Antiquities Scheme 25th July, 2:30. £7

Part of the Festival of Archaeology 2023 – Ciorstaidh Hayward Trevarthen, Finds Liaison Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, talking about the scheme and looking at some of the finds. See [here](#)

Mosaic Workshop 30th September 10:00-4:00. £70 incl. materials

Learn about mosaic materials, cutting and laying; make your own 20cm² panel. Details [here](#)

Ancient China: Lecture by Neil Meldrum

Readers of the newsletter will know that Neil has kindly provided 16 articles on the ancient world (so far!). The most recent ones were on early Chinese civilisation, so that there was some inevitable overlap with Neil's talk, which mainly looked at the period up to 221 BCE, when the first true Emperor emerged – Qin Shi Huang Di. This summary aims to keep the overlap with earlier articles to the minimum possible without losing the thread of the story.

The name 'China' is an English one, taken from the Qin (pronounced 'chin') dynasty from 221 BCE. Of course, Chinese characters are difficult, both to read and to translate, and literal translation may not give the correct sense or meaning (there have been around 50,000 different characters, with around 20,000 still in use but 8,000 usually sufficing for even the most educated; 3,000 is sufficient to read a newspaper). The characters the Chinese use for their own country are shown here, usually rendered as "Middle Kingdom" but could equally be "Central State", etc. Also, the conventions for writing Chinese words in Latin script aren't always obvious (e.g. X is usually pronounced 'sh'). For the Chinese, China is the only area of civilisation, with everyone else seen as 'barbarians'.

zhōng guó
中國

For a long time the Western world showed little interest in China's ancient past; only in the last 50 years or so has there been a widespread acknowledgment of the length of Chinese history and of Chinese historical achievements. Chinese suspicion about the motives and intentions of 'outsiders' seems to extend to their archaeology, where it can be difficult to get clear and comprehensive information, even from academic publications. Photographs of sites are often very limited and may well be blurred or show signs of censorship, despite there being no obvious reason for secrecy. That applies to some of the illustrations here, though may not be obvious at the scale used. It does, in any case, seem that research is continuing to push the origins of Chinese civilisation ever earlier.

Chinese civilisation grew initially along the banks of the Yellow River. A considerably less hospitable watercourse than the Nile, Tigris, Euphrates or Indus, the Yellow River was prone to catastrophic floods and to major changes of course, sometimes by hundreds of kilometres. The Chinese Neolithic in that area is dated to 8000-6000 BCE, based particularly on grains like millet and barley rather than rice, because of the climate. Further south along the Yangtze, settled farming seems to have started rather later, in that area more based on rice.



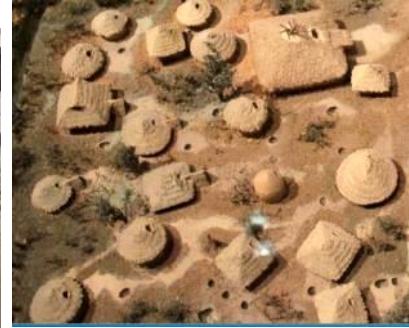
Stone architecture is very rare on early Chinese sites, and what survives is often compromised by being under China's modern cities. Often, though, early sites are found by discoveries of their large cemeteries, sometimes leading to the remains of the settlement. One such is the site of later Neolithic Banpo, in the Yellow River valley and close to modern Xi'an, dating to c. 4500 BCE. This, and nearby Jiangzhai, were centres of the widespread Yangshao culture (c. 5000-3000 BCE); building foundations have enabled a reconstruction of a typical settlement.



A tomb in Banpo cemetery



Banpo settlement excavation



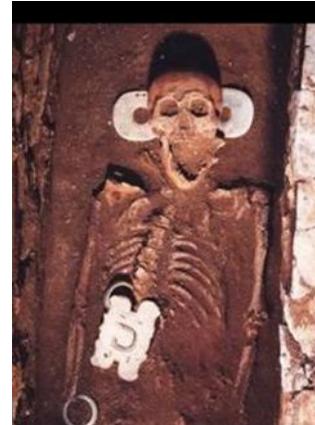
Jiangzhai reconstruction

As is often the case, whilst cemeteries have been found, tombs like that above have usually been robbed of valuables in antiquity, leaving the more mundane items such as pottery and basic tools (perhaps a good thing if the economy isn't to lose vital resources!). The Banpo Museum gives a good illustration of the limitations on available information. Its website (<https://bpymuseum.com/en/>) describes it as a major site for foreign tourists, yet gives few details of the site and culture, and only a limited view of its collections (basically pottery and a few tools), with none of the artefacts described.

The so-called 'Jade Age' c. 3500-2000 BCE is, unsurprisingly, characterised by its finely crafted jade artefacts and religious symbols, sometimes found in tombs like the one here. This is from the Hongshan culture on the lower reaches of the Yellow River, superseded by the Longshan culture from around 3000 BCE until the end of the Jade Age. Archaeology continues to expand our knowledge of this period, e.g. with excavations of one of the

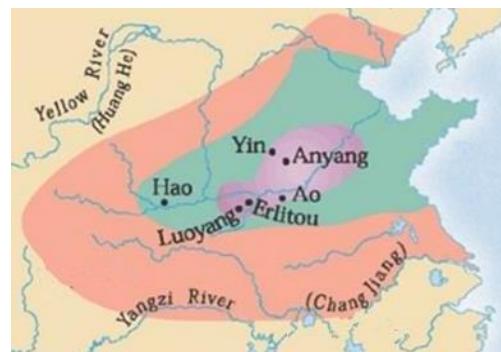


Longshan culture's major sites – Taosi. This city came to dominate most of the middle Yellow River valley, roughly bounded by the red line on the map. It is clear that Taosi's growth was through warfare, absorbing other indigenous cultures and inaugurating the advance of the Han Chinese. Taosi seems to have had a population of 20-30,000, been surrounded by a huge rammed-clay enclosure and showed evidence of a strict social hierarchy. Most notably, perhaps, it had a solar observatory, now reconstructed in ugly cement blocks – the only part of the site where clear photographs seem to be available online.

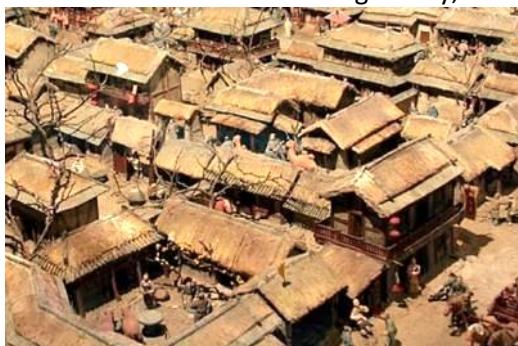


Longshan culture's major sites – Taosi. This city came to dominate most of the middle Yellow River valley, roughly bounded by the red line on the map. It is clear that Taosi's growth was through warfare, absorbing other indigenous cultures and inaugurating the advance of the Han Chinese. Taosi seems to have had a population of 20-30,000, been surrounded by a huge rammed-clay enclosure and showed evidence of a strict social hierarchy. Most notably, perhaps, it had a solar observatory, now reconstructed in ugly cement blocks – the only part of the site where clear photographs seem to be available online.

The Chinese Bronze Age is thought to have started around 2000 BCE, though some researchers suggest it was rather earlier; some of the much earlier tombs at Taosi contained copper artefacts. Taosi seems to have been in decline for some time and was perhaps overthrown by the peoples it had previously conquered. In any case, the early dynasties in China are recognised from then, first the Xia, then Shang, followed by the Zhou. The area controlled by the Xia (purple on the map) was smaller than of the Longshan culture, but control increased with each succeeding dynasty (though if you look for other maps, no two seem to agree on the exact boundaries of each dynasty). This is the period of complex, sophisticated bronze casting, particularly the huge vessels made during the Shang dynasty, as shown in previous newsletters, which far surpassed bronze casting from Europe.



Whilst Chinese writing is known from c. 1300 BCE during the Shang dynasty, the earliest inscriptions are divinatory on 'oracle bones', mostly turtle shells. They have provided a great deal of information on Shang society and beliefs, though known historical accounts come from much later. A major source is the work of Sima Qian (c. 145-86 BCE), perhaps less like 'our' Herodotus than Homer, in that his writing contains stories of past people, with some little more than myth. In fact the existence of the Xia dynasty was often considered to be legendary, but archaeology continues to add evidence that it really existed.



We should see these dynasties as coherent periods in history rather than continuing lines of closely related rulers. Also, it appears that political centralisation was relatively weak during these periods, certainly compared with the 'true' dynasties from Shi Huang Di onwards. Erlitou is thought to have been the Xia capital, and the archaeological remains have allowed the likely reconstruction shown here, a settlement design that could be still be seen throughout China less than a century ago. In fact, the remaining hutong

areas in places like Beijing aren't that dissimilar, albeit using modern materials.

All the best stories of rulers in these dynasties seem to involve concubines. Jie, apparently the last of 16 Xia rulers, had proved to be a good king until he became involved with the concubine Moxi. His obsession with her led to him neglecting his duties and living a life of excess and luxury. By about 1600 BCE, the regime was so weakened that the Shang were able to take over. The best-known Shang ruler was Wu Ding (1250-1192 BCE), who brought the Shang 'state' to the height of its power. He must though, have been very enamoured of his consort, Fu Hao, given the items buried with her in the necropolis at Anyang, a later Shang capital extending over 25km².



Perhaps such graves weren't actually that unusual, since this is one of the few found that hadn't been badly looted. Although not clear on the photograph, the lit-up niche has 2 skeletons, with a similar niche opposite and more human remains around the top of the wall. It would seem that, as wasn't uncommon through these dynasties, Fu Hao's entourage went to the grave with her. The pink area contains a large number of carved jade items, whilst the mound to its left is actually the crumbling remains of a horse.

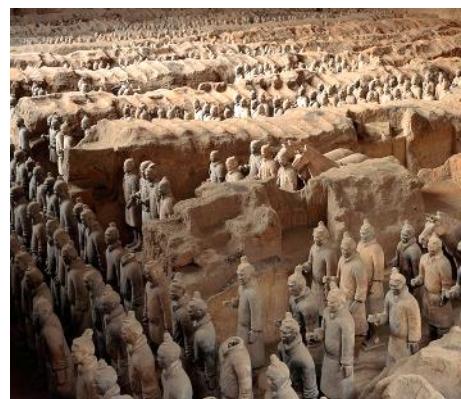
The Zhou came from the west, although their exact origins are unclear, and succeeded the Shang after the Battle of Muye in 1046 BCE. Until 771 BCE, when King You was killed, the temporal ruler also held spiritual control as the overseer of the sacrifices to the ancestors. The cult of ancestor veneration had grown through the Shang dynasty and clearly still held sway. King You was another ruler who became obsessed with a concubine, Bao Si, and it is tempting to see this as a similar situation to Jie and Moxi, although it seems more likely that You's death resulted from struggles within the ruling élites.

These lead to the break-up of any suggestion of centralised rule. The Zhou 'dynasty' continued for 550 years, but the king lost temporal power, though retained his central role in the ancestor cult. During the 'Spring and Autumn Period' up to c. 481, feudal lords ran up to 150 separate 'statelets' within the Zhou area; sources vary considerably on the exact number, but the map clearly can't show them all.



They were constantly fighting amongst themselves; warfare became endemic, especially in the succeeding 'Warring States' period as the small states were consolidated into seven larger ones and then just one. Yet, as Neil's slide stated, this was "one of the most intellectually and technologically innovative periods in the whole of world history, as well as being one of the most destructive in human terms."

I have glossed over the details of these periods as they are more fully described in last October's and December's newsletters. The famous Confucius (Kong Fuzi, 551- 479 BCE), and his lasting philosophy was covered there, alongside other philosophers whose views still hold sway for many. But it was Legalism, including the works of Han Fei in the mid-3rd century BC, which won the day for the Qin, an approach where everyone should work for the state and be subject to strict laws and punishment for transgressions. The first true Emperor of a unified China from 221 BCE, Qin Shi Huang Di, only lived another 11 years, although his as yet unexcavated tomb has lasted considerably longer; the vast necropolis around it includes the Terracotta Warriors.



Geoff Taylor

From the Archives 8

It seems that articles on natural history became more prominent in the Proceedings for a time, with very little of note in the previous 2 volumes covered in these articles. Volume VIII (1887) has nothing that I find of much relevance in it but there is a little more of interest in Volume IX.

An article on 17th century tokens seems to me of antiquarian, though not archaeological, interest. The post-Roman English coinage was almost wholly of silver with rare gold issues from around AD600, joined regularly by gold from 1344 during the reign of Edward III. However, the size of silver coins decreased gradually and debasements from the Sterling standard of .925 silver weren't uncommon, often to pay for wars. The worst was probably during Henry VIII's reign to pay for his extravagances, with a thin layer of silver over copper that often wore off, giving rise to his nickname of 'Old Coppernose'.

The smaller silver coins were easily lost and proposals were made to Elizabeth I to strike copper farthings, but she was averse to a base currency after the experience of her father's reign. In 1613, under James I, a patent was sold to John Stanhope, Baron Harrington to issue copper farthings, then renewed under Charles I. These token coins were issued in such quantities that they drove out much of the silver and gold (Gresham's Law). The patentees grossly abused the patent, refusing to change the farthings for silver and causing severe problems for those holding large quantities. The patent was revoked in 1644 and farthing tokens were required to be exchanged for silver paid for from the estates of the patentees.

However, no base metal coins were then issued for almost 3 decades and unauthorised tokens began to be produced within a few years by local corporations, tradesmen and shopkeepers. Initially they were mainly farthings, but halfpennies and then pennies became more common as the years passed. They were collected and returned to the issuers for silver as needed, properly fulfilling their role in providing "necessary change". These tokens were known as 'town pieces' and were struck in over a hundred towns and cities, including 8 in Dorset, though few of Dorset's are other than farthings. Among the illustrations are these from Poole and Wimborne.

Whilst fulfilling their role as small change, 17th century tokens could be rather inconvenient. Traders might well accept tokens struck in their own town but were much less likely to accept them from another town. The government intended to issue Royal copper money for some time, and pattern pieces were struck in 1665. However, it took until 1672 before the farthings of Charles II were ready for issue, when the tradesmen's tokens were proscribed and quickly disappeared.

There is also a piece analysing "The Celtic Tumuli of Dorset", based on the descriptions provided in a recently published volume, apparently covering the 190 of which the contents were then known. Of these, the description for 30 was insufficient to include them in the data. In essence, the article concludes that cremation was far more prevalent in Bronze Age burial mounds than burial. The number dug, no doubt poorly, does seem high and, of course, doesn't include the many more tumuli opened without any record. The long-held view of the Romans as a civilising influence is made very clear in considering an apparent change in customs found in some tumuli, with extended burials in stone-sided cists: "it may be taken to imply the dawn of new customs ... arising from an intercourse with a more civilized people [who] could hardly have been other than early Roman colonists." This is, of course, hardly likely even at the end of the Bronze Age c.1200BC, at which time settlements in the area of Rome were probably little different from those in England.

Geoff Taylor



Why is February the shortest month?

Blame the Romans (mostly), superstition and the clockwork of the Universe not fitting neatly into the way we measure time.

The oldest surviving calendar, attributed to the legendary Romulus, had just 10 months. It was related to the agricultural year, starting in spring so that the first month was March, traditionally named *Martius* after his ‘father’, Mars, the god of war. *Aprilis*, *Maius* and *Junius* were named after deities or aspects of Roman culture, but after that they were just numbered: *Quintilis*, *Sextilis* and so on. We have, of course, kept this numbering for the last 4 months of the year, up to the original 10th – December.

This calendar had 304 days – 6 months of 30 days and 4 of 31. The rest of the year, the winter when there was ostensibly no work in the fields, simply wasn’t in the calendar.

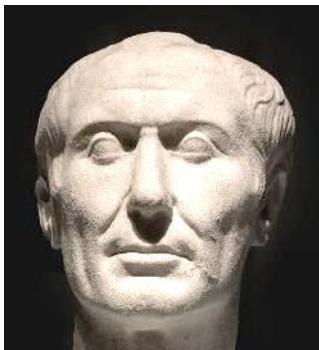
In 731 BC Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, decided that he’d rather line the calendar up with the phases of the moon. That would seem odd to us when the lunar year is 354.37 days against a solar year of 365.25 days (less just over a minute), but they went ahead. There was a superstition then that even numbers were unlucky, so they chose the year to be 355 days, although with 12 months for the 12 cycles of the moon each year. Two months had to be added – January, for the Roman god Janus of beginnings and endings, and February, from *februa* related to the purification rites which were part of the preparations for the coming spring. To keep odd numbers of days, the months of 30 days were changed to 29 and January also given 29 days. That meant February had to be 28 days (it’s a mathematical certainty, with an even number of months, that obtaining an odd total would require at least one month to have an even number of days).



So, February was the ‘unlucky’ month, and was also the time of the festival of Feralia – honouring the dead with food and gifts so that they didn’t rise and haunt the living.

Obviously, the calendar and the seasons soon fell out of alignment and another, ‘intercalary’, month was added intermittently to try to put things right. Mercedonius came before March, started on what would have been the 24th of February and lasted 27 or 28 days. One problem was that people living far from Rome might be very late hearing of the added month, or might never know. I imagine, though, that most farmers had their own ‘calendar’, just working by the seasons.

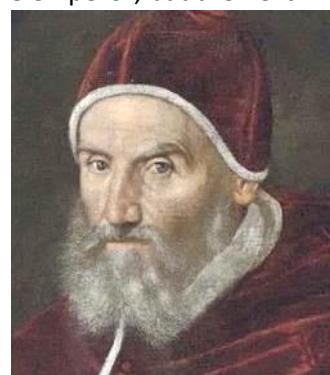
February has, then, simply remained as the shortest month in the two subsequent major changes to our calendar. The first was the Julian calendar introduced under Julius Caesar in 45 BC to remove the previous problems, when *Quintilis* became *Julius*. With a year set at 365 days, and months with the number of days we still use, there would eventually be a mismatch with the seasons. Leap years were therefore introduced, where every year divisible by 4 has an extra, intercalary, day. A mismatch will still occur but after quite a long time..



Sextilis became *Augustus* in 8 BC in honour of the emperor, but the next major change didn’t come until Pope Gregory XIII’s reign in 1582. The Gregorian calendar was introduced with a correction of 10 days,

so the 15th October followed the 4th, and century years weren’t to have an extra day unless the number of centuries is divisible by 4, so that 2000 was a leap year but 1900 wasn’t.

It takes about 3,300 years for the Gregorian calendar to gain a day, so a rule for millennia like that for centuries would come very close to ‘accuracy’, i.e. that the year 4000 wouldn’t be a leap year. I don’t think that it need worry us that this hasn’t been officially adopted.



Geoff Taylor

View from Above No. 52: North Poorton

*Photo by Sue
Newman
and Jo Crane*

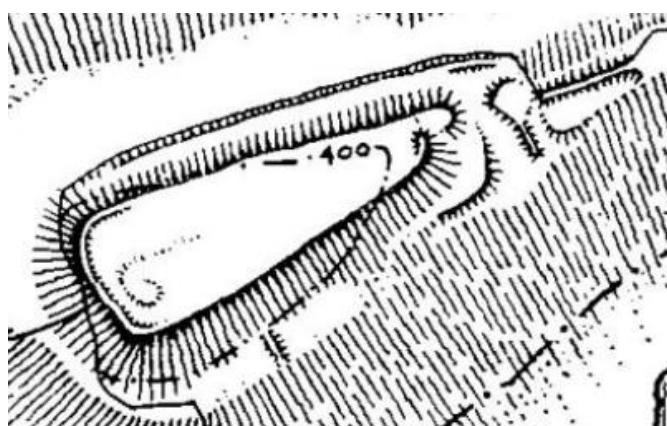


This scheduled ancient monument is about 4km south-east of Beaminster. North Poorton 'hillfort' is, though, a small and rather enigmatic construction. I know that it was surveyed by Dave Stewart, so he may well be able to add to or correct what I managed to find out.

This is an enclosure on the summit of a steeply sloping, roughly triangular, spur, from which the ground slopes further down. A transverse ditch across the spur at the narrow western end, and a rampart bank with ?traces of a stone wall, protects against access along the spur. The ditch and bank are eroded so that their original dimensions are unclear. There are traces of banks along the edge of the enclosure and some suggestions that the slopes down, a drop of up to 7m, have been steepened. The ground around the base of the spur falls 25m within about 70m.

The area enclosed is small at around an acre, and includes an irregular mound up to 0.5m high. RCHME, whose plan is shown, suggest the mound may be mostly natural, though Historic England records say that it shows traces of stonework.

The topographic position of the enclosure, and the construction work done, strongly suggest a defensive enclosure, suggested by some (e.g. Dorset HER) as an Iron Age hillfort. However, no relevant dating material has been found and Historic England say that it probably isn't prehistoric from its size and appearance . They suggest a post-Roman date, either an enclosed settlement or medieval castle.



Geoff Taylor/ Jo Crane

EDAS PROGRAMME 2023

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.

Wed 8th March	AGM & lecture	Andrew Morgan	The Origins of Dorset – in search of the Dorset/Hampshire Shire Boundary
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

Wed 15th March	Churches, chalices and baths: Recent work on Hadrian's Wall	Wareham Society	Mark Corney
Thu 16th March	Parish churches in the Late Medieval period	Blandford Society	Cindy Wood
Thu 16th March	Vikings in Britain (CHANGE TO PROGRAMME)	AVAS	Nick Griffiths
Wed 19th April	Down to earth: the story of Sandford Pottery	Wareham Society	Patrick Andrews
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
Thu 18th May	Report on the excavations at Druce Farm Roman villa (tbc)	Blandford Society	Lilian Ladle
Wed 21st June	What's in a name? A history of Wareham through its street names	Wareham Society	Lilian Ladle

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.