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East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER – May 2023

Sadly, I won't be able to be at the next lecture, the final one of the 'season' - Clare Randall talking about excavations at the manor of Putton, Chickerell, and looking further at the medieval landscape and the lives of people then. That's on Wednesday 10th May.

Alan has provided a summary of the excellent April talk by Peter Cox: **45 Years of Archaeology in Dorset**. It was impossible to cover all the things that Peter talked about, but I think Alan has mentioned those that members would particularly like to read about if they missed the lecture. I'm also grateful to Alan, as ever, for the 57th **Weblinks** and **Weblink Highlights**, much further down.

Gill Vickery's follow-up to Richard Hobbs' *Hinton St Mary Mosaic* presentation in November 2022 appeared in last January's newsletter. It was based on some of her research for the MPhil she was awarded last year. I asked her if she might write something more about that and she has kindly done so, included here as **Gill's MPhil** (Sorry! Blame me for the title, not Gill).

We continue with a further 4 more short articles, written by Vanessa Joseph and myself, celebrating our 40th anniversary with the 40 'items' members felt represented Dorset: ***The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset* by John Hutchins; St Aldhelm's Chapel, Worth Matravers; Mount Pleasant henge and St Augustine's Well, Cerne Abbas.**

The series of (usually) shorter articles continue with **From the Archives 10** and **View from Above 54: Tenantry Farm, part 1**, based on Sue Newman and Jo Crane's aerial photographs. This month they're both a bit longer as I couldn't see a suitable page break for the old Proceedings summaries, while there's a lot to say about Tenantry Farm (parts 2 and 3 to follow).

Bournemouth Library kindly gave us a dozen early, bound volumes of *The Antiquary* – the 'monthly magazine' of The Society of Antiquaries – I imagine there hadn't been much call for them in the past few years. They range from the very first in 1880 through to 1903 with gaps. Although not all in the best of condition, and some showing evidence of a little water damage, they are quite legible and not musty.

I thought that extracts and summaries might make for interesting reading, especially in view of our name, but (so far at least) it has proved too-time consuming to review the many short articles. However, there is a short article here taken from the introductions to the first issue: **The Antiquarians**.

If anyone wants some or all of them please let me know.

And then there's the **EDAS Programme**, now including next season's lectures from September to May next year. The **District Diary** is short as there are no details of the next season's talks yet.

The next newsletter, after our meeting season finishes, will be the midsummer one in July.

Geoff Taylor

45 Years of Archaeology in Dorset: Lecture by Peter Cox

On a miserable evening weather wise, we were treated to an engaging, and at times humorous, talk by Peter Cox of AC Archaeology. Peter spoke about the changes in archaeology, and some of the sites he has seen and been involved with, in his 45 years practising archaeology in Dorset. However, he started by clearing up any potential misunderstanding by pointing out that the Peter Cox who was given the UK's first ASBO for illegal metal detecting in Northamptonshire in 2013 (together with Darren West) was not him.

Growing up in Windsor, with a view of the Round Tower from the house, may have been an early influence in his, perhaps erratic, journey to becoming an archaeologist. Certainly, involvement in excavations at the age of 18 as part of the final phase of the M4 construction, which found Mesolithic artefacts overlying Roman, was a lesson in stratigraphy and sealed contexts.



Peter moved to Dorset in the year of the drought – 1976. Since the 1930s, archaeology ahead of new developments had relied on uncertain government funding and, as there were no professional archaeology outfits, investigations were largely either by academic institutions or amateur groups. The publication of *Rescue Archaeology* by Philip Rahtz in 1974 shone a light on this and, together with a number of 'unfortunate' cases, such as the threatened destruction of the Rose Theatre in London, resulted in a public outcry and the introduction of PPG 16 in November 1990.

Dorset was fortunate that it was – and still is – the only county for which the complete set of volumes of the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments of England were published. The final volume of 5 for Dorset was published in 1975. Friend of EDAS, Mark Corney, carried out much of the field work for RCHME in Dorset, having the advantage of a Royal Warrant that enabled him to enter private land for that purpose. These volumes were an invaluable resource for the Dorset Archaeological Committee, who then oversaw much of the archaeology in Dorset. They're still very useful.



The excavation at Dewlish Roman villa was an opportunity for Peter to learn rapidly evolving techniques from Bill Putnam. Putnam was then a lecturer at Weymouth College, which later became part of Bournemouth University, and also chaired the Dorset Archaeological Committee. Archaeology did not escape the advances in technology happening in almost every aspect of life, and Peter saw the changes during his career – starting with the application of statistics by the use of systematic sampling and box grid trenches (left) embraced by Putnam.

The early 1980s saw Peter working with Peter Woodward at Cleavel Point, and joining the newly formed Wessex Archaeology Committee (which later became Wessex Archaeology), also chaired by Bill Putnam. The work at Cleavel Point was the first of three large projects on the southern edge of Poole Harbour during Peter's career and revealed an extensive late Iron Age and Romano-British industrial complex with pottery kilns and salt pans. Evidence of occupation extended into the medieval period. The pottery kilns were a source of the local Black



Burnished ware, which had previously been thought to come from Staffordshire, but chemical analysis of the fabric by Southampton University identified the source of the clay as coming from the area around the southern edges of Poole Harbour.

Peter continued to see new technology changing the way archaeology was carried out. LiDAR revealed features previously hidden in wooded areas, magnetometry and resistivity allowed non-invasive surveys of the below surface features and satellite navigation (mainly using the US Global Positioning System - GPS) made surveys and feature-plotting much more accurate and fast. Digital photography also contributed to the generation of 3D images (called photogrammetry), whilst it became possible to rapidly identify unidentified finds on site using mobiles and social media, either by sending photographs to likely experts or putting them on relevant social media sites. The increasing capabilities of drones has, and continues, to allow new or simply more accessible ways of recording sites, such as digital photographic plans and photogrammetry of whole sites, or even just true vertical photographs as shown.



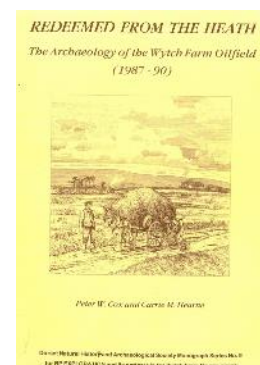
In 1991, Peter left Wessex Archaeology with, amongst others, Julian Richards, to form AC Archaeology. It was the following year that he then became involved in the Bestwall Quarry excavations. Lilian Ladle has led EDAS digs for quite a while, but many perhaps do not know that her outstanding abilities owe much to the mentoring of Peter, particularly during the Bestwall Quarry excavations over the period 1992 to 2005. As one reviewer of the resulting Dorset Natural



History and Archaeological Society monograph commented, this project provided a new standard for amateur and professional archaeologists working together. It also provided significant new insights, in some cases contradicting previous established thinking, into the occupation of this coastal area through much of the last 10,000 years.

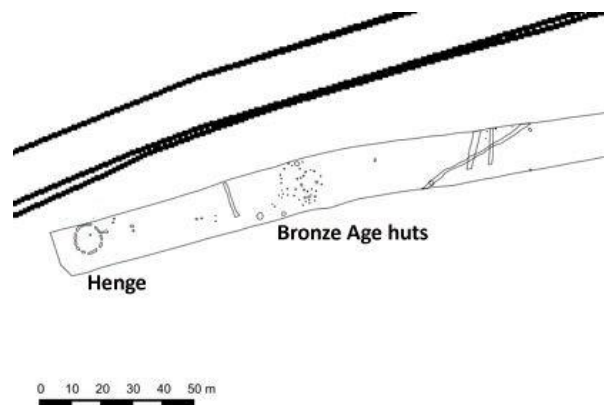
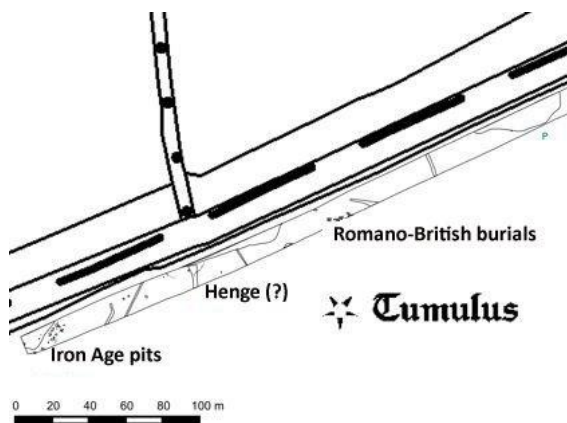
Lilian paid tribute to Peter when he talked about this dig. The project might not have happened as the quarry work it preceded had been subject to a planning appeal, but the Inspector failed to include an archaeological condition when granting the appeal. However, the team led by Lilian and guided by Peter were allowed to carry out their outstanding work ahead of the quarrying by Bardon Aggregates. Finds dated back to the early Mesolithic and continued into the Roman era, but the Bronze Age finds yielded a previously unknown picture of Dorset in that time. As one reviewer put it “generations of prehistoric farmers living in large, well-constructed round houses grew wheat, tended flocks of sheep and enjoyed a good lifestyle. There was plenty to eat and, on occasions, great feasts took place. They made their own pottery, developed trade networks, spun wool and wove it into cloth and adorned themselves with attractive, high-class jewellery.”

Whilst still at Wessex Archaeology, Peter had been investigating Wytch Farm, another site on the southern edge of Poole Harbour. The work at Wytch Farm was carried out in several phases from 1985 to 1989, and revealed much about the occupation and industry of this marginal land, adding to the previous work at Cleavel Point and the later work at Bestwall. Again, pottery production and salt pans were found, dating from around the middle Iron Age. Bronze Age occupation revealed a change from the previously held view of Bronze Age life being primarily on the chalk downlands of Dorset, and reinforced the emerging picture of a Bronze Age ecological disaster brought about by the removal of trees from the downlands causing erosion of the soils, which were then washed down



into the lowland areas, leaving the higher ground unproductive. The work at Wytch Farm also identified the previously unknown location of the lost medieval village of Newton, although the Heritage Gateway record still states “No certain remains have ever been found”, despite listing the relevant Cox and Hearne monograph shown above: *Redeemed from the Heath: the Archaeology of the Wytch Farm Oilfield 1987-1990*.

Another, more recent, project which overturned previous understandings was alongside the A31 just to the east of the Winterborne Kingston junction. Many EDAS members travelling on that road on their way to our Druce Farm excavations in 2012-2018 will have seen the work going on, but were unaware of its findings, or even that it was an archaeological excavation ahead of a new water transfer pipeline. This site revealed many previously unknown features lost under overlying soils, just a few of which are shown below. It was only discovered thanks to the rescue excavations ahead of the burying of the pipeline. The features revealed included henges, a Saxon cemetery with remnants of Roman Christianity, pond barrows and associated groups of 4 post holes (probably for excarnation platforms) and an Iron Age settlement and burials. Sadly, ‘advances’ in site safety regulations prevented invitations to local groups to visit the site; the rules now are rather different than in the photograph.



It came as no surprise that, when the clock called time on Peter's talk, there were many projects from his years in Dorset that would have to wait for another time. There followed several questions, and he was thanked for such an entertaining and informative evening, and requested to return to fill in some of the gaps.

Alan Dedden

Gill's MPhil

Our Editor has asked for a paragraph or two to introduce the link to my recently completed MPhil thesis "Continuity and Change in the British Roman Lifescape of East Dorset c. AD 350-650". This is the [LINK](#) to it in the Cardiff University Open Access repository, from where you can download a copy if you wish.

It is really difficult to do this in a short introduction as I lived, breathed, and created it over five years (needing to take time out for health problems and lockdown). When I started in 2017, I had no idea I would end up concentrating on this enigmatic period. I wanted to study the medieval chess pieces from Witchampton, the sequence at the site where they were found and the correspondence and archive of the 1920s excavation. There are more details of this site in my paper in the Dorset Proceedings 136 (2015). It is also briefly described in the RCHM(E) East Dorset, with the Witchampton entry [HERE](#).



The Witchampton chess pieces, in a British Museum photograph. They were found in ongoing excavations over 4 years in the 1920s, loaned then donated to the BM by Mrs E McGeagh. The lettering is considered to be an early medieval English style, although there is no evidence for chess being played in the Royal court prior to the arrival of the Normans. The BM record lists them as late Anglo-Saxon. All whalebone, with some blackened, the largest at 10.4cm high with the author's photo shown separately below, is thought to be a bishop (or perhaps a rook).



Briefly, when the site was excavated in the 1920s, Roman structures, an arguable post-Roman cemetery and the medieval chess pieces were found on a small mound in the river terraces of the River Allen. With the agreement of the owner and English Heritage, we carried out geophysical surveys and subsequently Wessex Archaeology covered the area with a ground penetrating radar survey. Nick Crabb and I are to report on this in a forthcoming paper.

I enrolled as a post-graduate researcher at Cardiff University because I required access to resources and an academic credibility for geophysical survey and networking. However, University academic requirements do not always allow for personal preferences. The chess pieces were dismissed (Talking Heads-like, I was "on the road to nowhere", I was told); I needed to find another theme as well as a wider comparative approach, a theoretical stance, a methodological explanation, plenty of historiography and jargon – and all in 50,000 words. There were also problems accessing the Poole Museum archive. The collection is jumbled in boxes, has been neglected and needs time to analyse it. Initially, access to the store was limited to one weekday morning (I was working at the time) and then, with lockdown, non-existent.

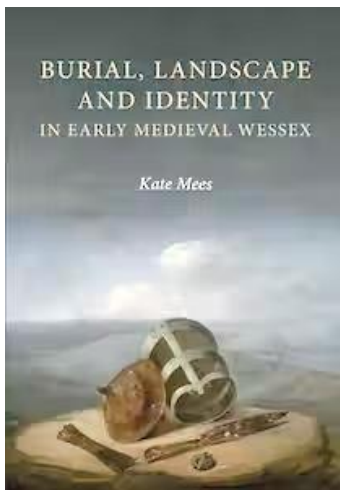
Over two years later, with a lot of reading (James Gerrard's *The Ruin of Roman Britain* was influential) and several false starts behind me, I was just beginning to get a grip on the approach. But I was also discovering that, as Mark Corney mused at the Druce Villa presentation, there was a real problem with AD 410. Now this was something I thought I could follow through, but another problem is the lack of 5th to 7th century archaeological evidence in Dorset (Poundbury being the well-known exception). My argument is that the idea of what is 'Roman' masks later activity. Fortunately, as time goes on, more datable evidence for continuity is being found nationally, for example at Chedworth (reported in *Current Archaeology* in December 2020 and available [HERE](#)).



Martin Papworth working on the possibly 5th century mosaic at Chedworth. Photo credit: National Trust/Stephen Haywood.

Of course, with more research I often found I was on the wrong track and needed to modify and adapt my conclusions. Being able to access talks and conferences via *Zoom* during lockdown, and subsequently, meant I could include new project data and sites, and I was regularly amplifying my evidence and adapting my conclusions. (And many thanks to EDAS who *Zoomed* their lectures and also provided access to other local society meetings.)

For EDAS members, there will be interest in the comparative use of sites across Dorset, including those personally known to them. It was notable that Dorset 'villa' sites, while numerous and well-known, have few detailed reports. For more recent excavations, such as Druce and Myncen Farm, I had to rely on interim reports. The newly published Dewlish report by Bournemouth University was very useful. Indeed, I was already trying to find evidence that the deep sub-rectangular pit at Witchampton could have been used for lime storage, when Iain Hewitt argued such use at Dewlish. It seems about time for a detailed overview of Roman Dorset now we have some good reports being published.



Kate Mees has published her PhD results on post-Roman Wessex burial traditions (*Burial, Landscape and Identity in Early Medieval Wessex* Boydell Press 2019) but more detailed work and scientific analysis could now be carried out on Dorset 'post-Roman' funerary sites with new and updated information. This applies to Worth Matravers cemetery, particularly important with the ongoing extensive DNA project on Anglo-Saxon migration. This was reported in *Nature* journal in September 2022 at this [LINK](#).

Luckily, I had earlier 'attended' a *Zoom* conference which explained the results. Worth Matravers is the only Dorset cemetery in the study, and it tends to support the hypothesis of an east/west divide, with Northern European influences on the east and British to the west. Worth Matravers and other southern coastal communities were influenced by movement from France. This endorses the theory of a long association of inter-relations across the Channel, which is indicated in the early Roman period from finds at Manor Farm, Portesham, reported on by John Valentin in the *Dorset Proceedings* 125 (2004). This site is a good witness for Roman-medieval-modern continuity of occupation.

Three newly discovered early medieval Dorset cemeteries were reported in 2019: Bloxworth Down (between Bloxworth and Winterborne Kingston), Lillington (3 miles south of Sherborne) and Friar Waddon (about 5 miles north-west of Weymouth). These were useful for comparing political and natural landscape positions of community cemeteries. Friar Waddon was reported by John Boothroyd in *British Archaeology* in January 2022, and is a very important site which, hopefully, will be fully analysed in future research. [Peter Cox's site above looks relevant too – ed.]

With all this in mind, and like any research, my interpretation is a snapshot, using available evidence and influenced by my interests and experiences as well as the current trends for study and interpretation of archaeological remains. Had I carried on, I am sure alternative narratives would have emerged.

Finally, if you just want to read about the Witchampton site in the thesis, it is mainly contained within the Appendix (p.203). I must emphasise that the site is in a private garden, not accessible, and for the Roman site there is nothing to see!

Gill Vickery



Site of the 1920s Witchampton excavation pictured in 2018, view north-east. Photo credit: John Oswin

Wimborne St Giles Carriage Ride Walk, Thursday 7th September

This walk will be around the perimeter of the St Giles estate, following the late C18th, early C19th 'carriage ride'. The paths and tracks are on private estate land, so the walk is by kind permission of the Earl of Shaftesbury.

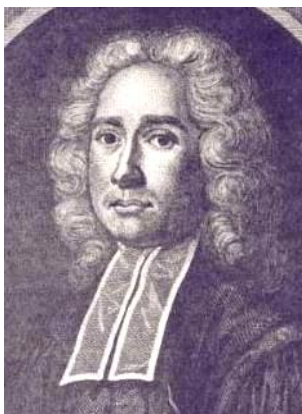
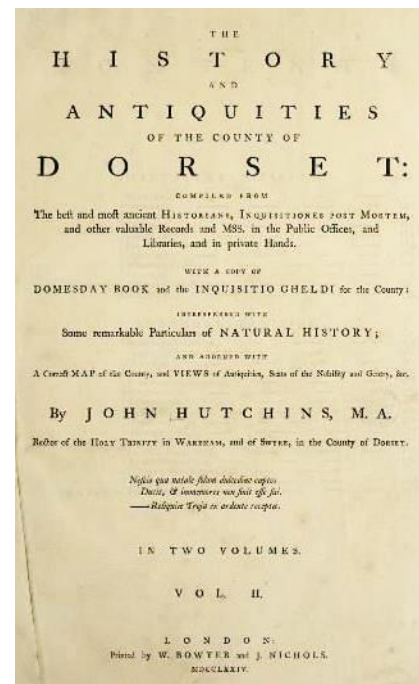
It is 11 miles, so only suitable for regular walkers of similar distances, at a reasonable pace. The leader, Alan Dedden, will talk about the history of the ride, and other points of interest ranging from Bronze Age barrows to WWII.

If you would like to take part, please email Alan at alan.dedden@gmail.com to reserve your place.

The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset by John Hutchins (GT)

Hutchins (1693-1773) began collecting material for his book in the 1730s, but it wasn't published before he died. The efforts of Richard Gough and William Cuming led to its publication in two folio volumes the following year. The print run of less than 700 (sources vary) sold at 2 guineas, but copies soon rose in price; today a set in good condition can be over £1,000, and the two later 4-volume editions, published up to 1815 and up to 1870, can be even more expensive. However, free online access is available, e.g. from the 'Internet Archive', and modern reprints also exist.

With a BA from Oxford, John Hutchins was ordained in 1722 or 1723, and initially became the curate in Milton Abbas. With the patronage of Jacob Bancks, the lord of the manor, he became rector of Swyre and then also of Melcombe Horsey, though vacated the latter when becoming rector of Holy Trinity, Wareham in 1744. With the help and encouragement of both his patron and the antiquarian Browne Willis, he began gathering information from across the county, later searching the principal libraries as well as records in the Tower of London.



The rise in price of the first edition, almost from the day of publication, was clearly in recognition of the high value of Hutchins' book as a source of reference, recognising both the accuracy and the extent of the underlying investigations. However, as many will know, the work narrowly missed being lost in the 'Great Fire of Wareham' in July 1762. While the rectory, including all of John's library, was lost to the flames, the Dorset documentation was saved. John was conducting a service in Swyre but his wife, Anne, rescued the documents which he had been collecting for decades. It is clear that she took considerable risks to retrieve John's papers, though the story of her standing in the River Frome with papers on her head is probably apocryphal.

John's later life was marred by illness, and he suffered a stroke in 1771, apparently not long after completing research on the *History*. He is buried in the Priory Church of Lady St Mary, Wareham.

St Aldhelm's Chapel, Worth Matravers (VJ)

This isolated chapel stands on cliffs 108 metres above sea level on St. Aldhelm's Head in the parish of Worth Matravers. It takes its name from Aldhelm, renowned across Europe for his scholarship, and appointed first Bishop of Sherborne when King Ine divided the Diocese of Wessex in AD 705. Its first mention is in the reign of Henry III (1216-1272), when the chapel of St. Mary in Corfe Castle and the chapel of St. Aldhelm in Purbeck were each served by a chaplain (Hutchins). It appears to have gone out of use by 1625.



According to Historic England: "Although always described as a chapel ... the plan form, orientation, and small amount of natural lighting are unusual for a church." The angles of the building point to the cardinal points of the compass, not the walls as is



customary. The 7.77 metre square shape is most unusual for an ecclesiastical building. However, the vaulting of the 12th century roof and the existence of medieval graves outside near the walls, together with its position within a circular earthwork, suggest that it was a religious building from the beginning.

Experts believe that the building occupies the centre of a pre-Conquest Christian enclosure and that the Chapel itself probably rests on an earlier timber building. Others say that the chapel was also built to provide an important defensive capability for Corfe Castle on what

was the vulnerable "blind" southern side of the castle channel approach. Certain unusual construction details within the chapel walls are replicated at Corfe Castle.

From chantry to 'wishing' chapel to coastguard's store... today, St Aldhelm's Chapel, a Grade I listed building, is still used on special occasions for Christian worship.

Mount Pleasant henge (GT)

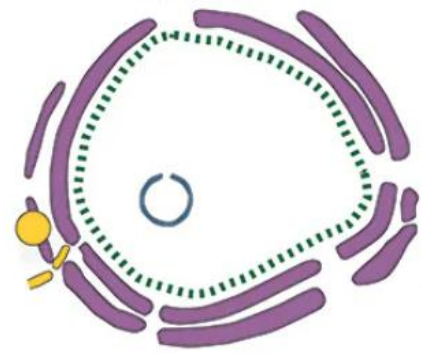
Mount Pleasant is one of five known 'mega', or 'super', Neolithic henges in southern England, measuring about 370x320m. The others are Avebury, Durrington Walls, Knowlton and Marden (see Midsummer 2022 newsletter). It is only 1.5km from the centre of Dorchester, just beyond the housing estate to the east of Max Gate. Access is difficult and, as the field has been under cultivation since at least the mid-19th century, there isn't much left to see.



This huge henge is, unusually, at the highest point of a ridge; it must have been an imposing structure, with banks up to 4m high. Geoff Wainwright's excavations in the 1970s shaped interpretations, but much more is now known from examining and carbon dating his finds, and from geophysical survey.

With the usual caveats and possible date ranges, the henge (purple in the plan below) was constructed in the later Neolithic c. 2550 BC. Within a century or so access was limited by a palisade (green), Conquer Barrow was constructed (yellow), before the ditch of 'Site IV' was dug inside the henge (blue). The

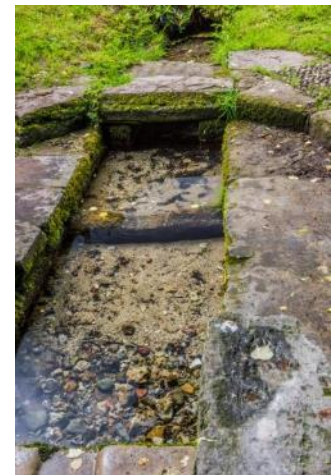
photograph above shows the Site IV excavation in 1971, with the concentric pattern of (undated) post holes visible, giving four direct paths to or from the centre, although the site could only have been entered along the northern path.



The palisade was really more of a fence of about 1,600 large oak timbers, perhaps 6m high, which must have been brought from some distance. The oak trunks flanking the entrances on the north and east were 1.8m in diameter, with only about a metre between them. Access was clearly very restricted, both physically and visually, yet the animal bones suggest that huge feasts were held. Conquer Barrow is thought to be very close in date to the palisade – a ‘large round mound’ of the late Neolithic rather than a Bronze Age barrow.

St Augustine's Well, Cerne Abbas (VJ)

Springs and holy wells have been visited through the centuries for their virtues of healing and divination. If a physical cure was sought, the believer would drink, or sometimes bathe in, the water. The holy wells were such popular places of worship in pagan times that the early Roman Church took great pains to stamp them out, or the well metamorphosed into a Christian shrine.



In his book *The legendary lore of the holy wells of England*, published in 1893, Robert Charles Hope identified five wells in Dorset: Abbotsbury,



The ancient ritual of well dressing still takes place in Upwey.

Upwey (wishing wells) and Cerne, Ibberton, and Wareham (associated with saints). St Augustine's Well in Cerne was originally the Silver Well

and Edwold, a member of the Mercian Royal family, was told in a vision to travel to it. When he came to Cerne, he gave silver pennies to a shepherd for bread and water. The man showed him the well, where St Edwold then lived until his death in 671.

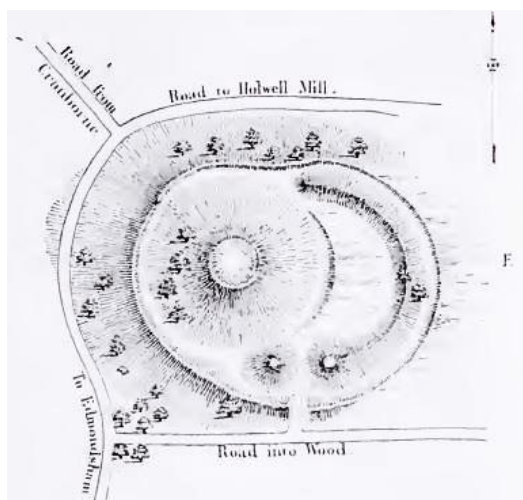
Of course, there are many variations on the legend, and where does St. Augustine come in? Another story tells that when Cerne Abbey was founded in the 970s, the monks hired an itinerant hagiographer called Gotselin who composed a new legend ascribing the well to St Augustine to make the place more attractive to pilgrims. The site is the only holy well in Dorset to have had a shrine; Leland records that there was a chapel to St Augustine built over the spring.

Interestingly, the sites of many Roman villas and dwelling-houses have been discovered near the springhead of streams. In 1875, when Roman coins and pottery were discovered in a meadow in Horton, a search of the spring revealed 140 coins and seven perfect vases. The so-called Holy Well at Cranborne is a spring near the site of a Roman villa discovered in the 1890s by a local antiquary. In this case, the name of the hamlet, Holwell, is clearly derived from “holh wiella” which means “well in the hollow”.

I (Geoff) recently emailed everyone about a planned project to follow up on the 1950s excavation on Waddon Hill Roman fort – initially a geophysical survey and then possible test pitting. It was hoped that a visit could be arranged, and about 20 people expressed interest in going. Unfortunately the project has been delayed, and it's now more likely that a visit won't be possible until late Autumn. I'll let everyone know.

From the Archives 10

Continuing a review of Volume XI of the Proceedings for 1890, there is a partial rebuttal to the article on 'Cranborne Castle' covered in *From the Archives 4*. That said that it was prehistoric in origin, with the smaller mound on top of the larger being 'the seat of a judge', perhaps back to Druidic times, when we know it was a burial mound for 2 horses. This article says it is Saxon in origin, where the Hundred and Manorial Courts were held under the lords of Cranborne Manor up to Brihtric in the mid-11th century. As in the previous article, we believe it to be a small Norman motte and bailey, with no information on what was there before but a strong suggestion that it was the site of the Hundred Courts at some point.



A description of Kingston Lacy by the owner, Walter Ralph Bankes, includes information about the red granite Egyptian obelisk in the grounds. It was removed from Philae in 1819 by Giovanni Belzoni, often described as a pioneering archaeologist, and clearly clever and knowledgeable. In reality, though, he was an unscrupulous treasure hunter with little regard for his workmen or the damage done to 'less valuable' remains. The location of the obelisk at Kingston Lacy was chosen by the Duke of Wellington, who laid the foundation stone in 1827.



Turning to Volume XII, there is a potentially interesting article on 'Stone implements in the Dorset Museum', though the limited number of illustrations often makes it difficult to decide exactly what is being described. The one shown left, found near Cranborne, is described as an arrow head though, at about 10cm long, it may more likely be a spear head. The term 'celt', apparently an antiquarian word coined in 1696, is used for "an implement like an axe". The writer (and I) feel that this is an ill-chosen word, as it has nothing to do with Celtic people and is rather ill-defined given some of the examples in the text. The 'celt' pictured right, found in one of the Knowlton ditches, does seem to partly match the definition, though is rather small for an axe at about 5.5 cm long.



Whilst some of the Society's members were still less than convinced that many struck flints were ancient tools, it is clear that there was a growing appreciation of how different types of struck flint fitted into different ancient periods. The writer also discusses the making of polished flint, comparing the time taken to that done by some South American people in living memory in boring holes in beryl artefacts, apparently a task that could be handed on from father to son. He felt that smoothing flint over months wasn't arduous, but rather a welcome relief from hunting and working the land. An anthropological view is also taken of how some of the tools might be used "from seeing savages at work", rather revealing of attitudes of the time.

An article about Roman walls, particularly for Dorchester, mostly discusses the supposed construction on the basis of the principles set out in *Architectura* by Vitruvius (c. 25 BC) and Vegetius' *Epitoma rei militaris* (c. 370 AD). As he admits, there is no evidence that Dorchester's original ditches and banks were military fortifications, whether constructed shortly after the conquest or later, nor that any construction was as late as 370, so that both books seem likely to have little relevance (they are, though, the only references we have). In fact, our best guess is that the earthwork circuit was made after 130 AD, probably later in the 2nd century, with stone walls not until the late 3rd or early 4th century.

The author says that the wall "is said to have been ruined for defensive purposes by the Danes", which is actually attributed to William Camden in 1586. Walls certainly remained at least until the Civil War,

though no doubt with much medieval work, after which they deteriorated and most had been demolished by the early 18th century. By the mid-18th century most of the ditches had also been filled in. However, Speed's map of 1611 shown here, gives a fairly clear view of the line of the wall, except in the north-east part, generally confirmed by subsequent investigations (as far as I know, the line of the north-east section remains uncertain).

Geoff Taylor



View from Above No. 54: Tenantry Farm, part 1

**Photo by Sue Newman
and Jo Crane**



Tenantry Farm buildings are about 2 miles north of Rockbourne, Hampshire, along a long straight drive leading north-east off Rockbourne Road. The farm is also an equestrian centre and hosts events like music festivals (see <https://www.tenantry.co.uk/>). I (Geoff) have known about it for well over 20 years from a guy I knew at work who told me about the large number of finds he had made metal detecting there but, more interestingly, about the excavations done by Heywood Sumner, which he said he'd found in a library book.

I discovered later that Sumner had excavated at Tenantry Farm from 1911-13, unusually with the help of 3 workmen as he usually worked alone, and published the results in 1914. I couldn't get hold of the book¹, and thought little more about it until about 11 years ago when the site became of interest in my research. The University library had the book and I also managed to track the metal detectorist down.

However, he never provided the promised list of finds, the museum he said where they were lodged didn't have any knowledge of them or him, nor was there anything on the Portable Antiquities database. I'd often thought he was a bit of a Walter Mitty character!

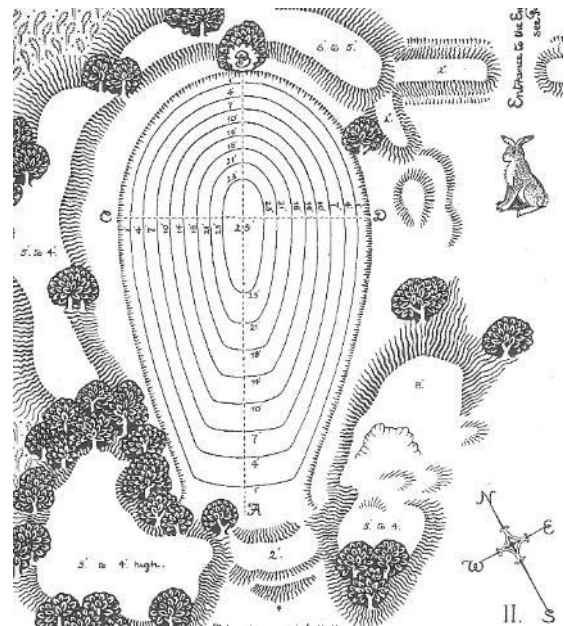
Perhaps a lot of a Walter Mitty character, as I visited the farm in September 2013 and was lucky enough to bump into the long-resident tenant farmer, who told me that the detectorist didn't report all that many finds to him (by that time another detectorist had had permission to search for many years). The tenant was very interested in the farm's history and kindly took me on a tour in his ancient Range Rover. There was, however, hardly anything to see on the ground of the places Heywood Sumner had excavated, some of which are the features in the aerial photograph. The most obvious is the long double line, marking part of a double-ditched Romano-British enclosure of about 96 acres.

This scheduled site is on the Heritage at Risk register, presumably because the features visible to Sumner are now mostly invisible due to ploughing (Historic England's details of this and of the schedule are sparse almost to the point of uselessness). The bank between the ditches is visible in a few places, particularly along the south-western part of the enclosure as in this photograph where it is cut by a farm track.



There are more aerial photographs from Jo and Sue, and much more to say about relating them to Sumner's excavations, but I'm going to leave that to the next in the series and just cover something I thought rather intriguing – Spring Pond. If you Google 'Spring Pond' you will find quite a few, but not this one (at least, I didn't), and you'll also find that the enclosure is called 'Spring Pond Enclosure' or similar. My information about it is, therefore, limited to that from Heywood Sumner and from the farmer.

Sumner's plan of the pond shown here makes it 200 feet long, 110 feet wide and up to 25 feet deep. It is clearly very regular in shape, implying that it is man-made, with irregular mounds of earth around it that were presumably spoil dug from the depression. In fact, the farmer said his rough measurement of the volume of the spoil heaps was fairly close to the volume of the pond. He also said that he had planted a large, marked pole at the deepest point of the pond, still there when I visited, giving a maximum depth of 6m. This is clearly less than Sumner's measurement and he was known for his accurate surveying, so perhaps the pond had silted-up between the two measurements.



The Roman period bank and ditches are shown north-east of the pond, above the rabbit, with an entrance to the enclosure of unknown age. It would seem that the northern edge of the pond cut into the southern edge of the Roman enclosure, with the line of the bank and ditches continuing in a straight line north-west beyond the edge of this plan, now obscured by the mound of spoil and by having been ploughed flat in the arable field north and west of the pond.

That, and the spoil covering the bank, strongly suggest that the pond is post-Roman. The changes in the level of the water table since Roman times, measured by the depth of Roman wells in the area, imply that it was dug many centuries later, as a constant stream probably ran along a nearby shallow valley at the time the enclosure was constructed. Evidence from Sumner's excavations suggests that was in the 3rd century. The farmer had no information about its age, but thought it was last thoroughly cleaned out during Victoria's reign. This may well come from Sumner's hearsay evidence from locals that it was deepened more than 50 years earlier.

The pond is, though, 'winterborne' – as the water table on this chalk downland rises towards the end of the year, so the pond fills from the bottom and the stream through Rockbourne starts to flow. When full it spills over, but runs under the spoil heap to the south. Into spring and summer it slowly drains away until the Rockbourne stream also dries up and visitors might wonder why the houses along the road through the village have bridges to them.

Sumner must have seen the pond when dry to obtain the measurements, but he particularly waxes lyrical about the sight of the pond full of water – “brimming with transparent water that descends to a depth of amethystine blue” and “unexpected, so abrupt, so deep, so clear”. Sadly, I’ve only seen it dry, but the farmer told me that it could be quite dangerous on a still day when close to full as the water was almost invisible and difficult to climb from once in.

¹ Sumner, H. 1914. Excavations on Rockbourne Down. Chiswick Press.

Geoff Taylor/Jo Crane

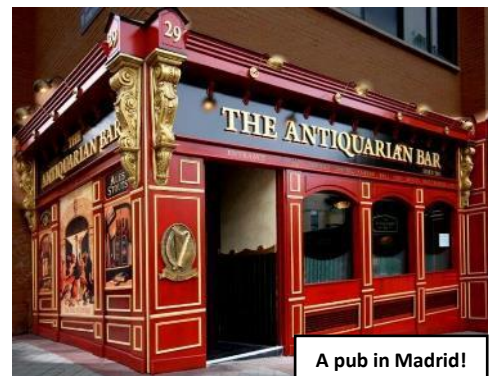
The Antiquarians

The Society of Antiquaries was formed in 1751 by Royal Charter, and remains a prestigious organisation where Fellowship is only open by invitation and election. Lilian Ladle is, of course, a Fellow.

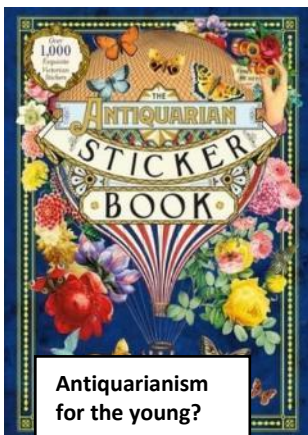
They published *Archaeologia*, subtitled *Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Antiquity*, between 1770 and 1991, then relaunched it in 2023 online-only with open access. *The Antiquary* magazine was first published in 1880, continuing monthly until 1915 as far as I can tell. A modern version is now published every month. There is also the *Antiquaries Journal*, published annually since 1921.

As an 'antiquarian society', I felt that the descriptions of antiquarianism from the preface and introductory article in the first edition of *The Antiquary* would be of some relevance to EDAS members. I have very much summarised the following, but it mostly uses the original wording.

In spite of the fact that this age worships progress so keenly, there is in us a deep seated reverence for antiquity. It shows itself in devotion to ancient art, architecture, painting, design, etc., and in the eager reception accorded to fresh discoveries of relics or works of antiquarian interest [by which he means archaeological finds].



The *Gentleman's Magazine* has for some time ceased to fill the position as the organ of all students of antiquity [it continued in print but presumably didn't cover the 'right' subject matter adequately from the 'New Series' in 1834], and we desire to take up the work which it abandoned. We shall not, however, allow ourselves to be so restricted in our choice of subjects.



Our pages will furnish original papers on such subjects as old abbeys, alchemy and witchcraft, ancient ballads, ancient castles, local antiquities, archaeology, bells, books, cathedrals, epitaphs and inscriptions, genealogy, illuminated MSS, local traditions, manorial customs and tenures, monumental brasses, numismatics, old English poets ... and English and foreign topography [this is less than half of the list].

The study of antiquity has of late years acquired a new popularity, not only with the class it formerly delighted, those loving the past and affecting to hate the present and despair the future. It is also popular

with those who have a real belief in progress, but know that it must be built on a solid foundation of fact and ideas. This study must commend itself to others beyond the genial but purposeless dilettanti; it must not be the especial privilege of old men who have lost their interest in active life. Further comment would be superfluous.

Geoff Taylor

I've had an update from the Chase & Chalke partnership/Cranborne Chase AONB, which is [here](#). It covers training opportunities, talks and guided walks – some archaeological or historical, though particularly about wildlife on the Chase.

Dig Ventures are publicising an Archaeology Field School in the Boyne Valley, Ireland. This looks like a fascinating opportunity to learn more about excavation in an area that's extremely rich in prehistoric monuments – if you have the time and money. The details are [here](#), as well as a couple of links to online talks and to a course.

Weblink Highlights April 2023

A very short list this month for reasons unknown, made only slightly more respectable by a late rush in the last 2 days!

Given that most 'recreational' drugs are derived from plants or fungi, it comes as no surprise that it existed 3,000 years ago. However, it does make a good attention grabbing headline, or in the modern parlance, clickbait.

The Royal Society have placed on display 4 objects that 'made science history'. In the BBC News item on this event, their Climate and Science Reporter, Georgina Rannard, states that "inventors in the 1830s and 1840s were experimenting with a new idea". That is factually correct, but it overlooks even earlier experiments such as those carried out by Thomas Wedgwood, son of Josiah Wedgwood. His experiments were published – and acknowledged – in 1802, in the Journal of the Royal Institution in a paper by Humphrey Davy. Wedgwood lived at Eastbury House, near Tarrant Gunville, from 1800 until his death at age 34 in 1805. He is buried in St Mary's Church at Tarrant Gunville, and there is a memorial plaque to him in the church..

Alan Dedden

April Weblinks - No. 57

New Study Disputes Interpretation Of Stonehenge As Ancient Calendar
[Was Stonehenge an ancient calendar? A new study says no. | Live Science](#)

New Analysis Shows Tartan Found In The 1980s Is The Oldest
[Oldest Scottish tartan ever found was preserved in a bog for over 400 years | Live Science](#)

1,000 Year-Old Decorated Brick Tomb Discovered In China
[1,000-year-old brick tomb discovered in China is decorated with lions, sea anemones and 'guardian spirits' | Live Science](#)

Only Surviving Fragment Of 'Slave Cloth' Found In Derbyshire Records Office
[Only surviving fragment of 'slave' cloth found in Derbyshire record office | Slavery | The Guardian](#)

Evidence Found Of People Taking Drugs 3,000 Years Ago

[People were taking drugs in Spain 3,000 years ago, study finds - BBC News](#)

Remains Of Roman Fortlet Found Near Clydebank

[Archaeologists discover remains of Roman fortlet near Clydebank - BBC News](#)

Hidden Symbols And 'Anomalies' Found In 'Stone Of Destiny' To Be Used At Coronation

[Hidden symbols and 'anomalies' discovered in 800-year-old 'Stone of Destiny' to be used in Charles III's coronation | Live Science](#)

Royal Society Put On Display 4 Objects That Made Science History

[Royal Society: Four incredible objects that made science history - BBC News](#)

Pre-Inca Mummy Found In Peru

[Buenos Aires Times | Pre-Inca, centuries-old teenage mummy unearthed in Peru \(batimes.com.ar\)](#)

Roman Military Camps Identified In Arabian Desert

[Roman military camps identified in Arabian desert \(rte.ie\)](#)

Study Makes New Insights Into Origins Of The Picts

[Aberdeen University study reveals new insights into the origins of Scotland's mysterious Picts \(pressandjournal.co.uk\)](#)

Rare Viking Age Iron Hoard Found In Basement In Norway

[Rare, 1,000-year-old Viking Age iron hoard found in basement in Norway | Live Science](#)

Illegally Held Anglo-Saxon Coins Rewrite English History

[Anglo-Saxon coins: Illegally held hoard rewrites English history - BBC News](#)

EDAS PROGRAMME 2023-24

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 10 th May	Lecture	Clare Randall	The manor of Putton and the potential of medieval archaeology in Dorset
Wed 13 th September	Lecture	Gordon Bartlett	The Rise & Decline of Bournemouth & Poole Tramways
Wed 11 th October	Lecture	Dr Anthony Firth	The Historic Character of the River Stour
Wed 8 th November	Lecture	Tom Cousins	The Maritime Archaeology of Poole Bay
Wed 13 th December	Lecture	Gordon Le Pard	Dorset Churches
2024			
Wed 10 th January	Zoom lecture	David Reeve	The oldest secular buildings in Wimborne
Wed 14 th February	Lecture	Miles Russell	Frampton Villa excavations
Wed 13 th March	AGM & Lecture	Phil D'Eath & Geoff Taylor	The 2023 Field Trip to Kent
Wed 10 th April	Lecture	Harry Manley	The Dorchester Aqueduct
Wed 8 th May	Lecture	Andrew Morgan	The Origins of Dorset – in search of the Dorset/Hampshire Shire Boundary

DISTRICT DIARY

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.