



East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER – December 2023

Seasons Greetings for this, the last newsletter of the year. That's perhaps a bit early for Christmas, though I think that Christmas adverts started over a month ago; they seem to get earlier every year.

On a less happy note, we were very sad to learn that two longstanding friends of EDAS passed away in November – Malcolm Lyne and Mark Corney. Thank you to Lilian for her **In Memoriam**.

The final lecture before Christmas is, of course, at St Catherine's Church Hall - Gordon le Pard on 'Some interesting Dorset Churches', with stories of their histories and of people associated with them: Wednesday 13th December at 7:30pm.

November's excellent lecture was by Tom Cousins of Bournemouth University, with some short video clips that greatly helped understanding. I can't reproduce these here, of course, but I hope the summary, **The Maritime Archaeology of Poole Bay**, does justice to Tom's wide-ranging presentation.

A reminder of the note I sent giving advance warning of a change to the 14 February 2024 meeting: we won't be able to access the hall until 7:15 (please don't arrive earlier) and the meeting will start at 7:45.

I also mailed everyone with the news that *Current Archaeology's* 2024 Archaeology Awards include a nomination for the Druce Farm monograph, as Book of the Year. That's a lovely accolade for all those involved in the Roman villa work, but especially for Lilian and her huge effort in putting together this comprehensive and important report in a very short time. Find out more about all the nominations and make your vote [HERE](#)



Thank you to Vanessa for her article on the pottery course we organised: **Taking a closer look at pottery from Dorset**. She's also contributed two more articles in the series celebrating Dorset and our 40th anniversary. This month's four items are on the **Cerne Abbas Giant**; the **Medieval cross slab, Wimborne All Hallows**; the **Dorset Cursus** and **Ghostly painted tales at Tarrant Crawford**.

Thank you also to Graham Hoddinott, who lives in Dorchester and can only attend meetings on *Zoom*. He had a particular interest in an article in *From the Archives 13* in the last newsletter and has kindly sent some further information on King John's visits to Dorset. I've just added information from, and about, the previous article so you don't have to refer back to it.

Alan's **Weblinks** and **Weblink Highlights** is now on its 62nd appearance and Sue and Jo' aerial photos in **View from Above** on number 58. There's also **Early castles in Britain 2**, following on from the first in this series, but no space for 'From the Archives' this month. The **EDAS Programme** and the **District Diary** complete the newsletter as usual.

Geoff Taylor

In Memoriam

I had some very sad news this week that two of my colleagues had died recently, and both were closely associated with the Bestwall, Worth and Druce Projects. They will be very greatly missed in the archaeology community and beyond.

Mark Corney

Mark was a Senior Landscape Investigator for the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England for 20 years, a visiting fellow at the University of Bristol and lectured widely to academic and local societies. He was a regular contributor to television documentaries and led numerous archaeology tours. His area of expertise encompassed the Iron Age, Roman and Post-Roman Britain and Europe – his depth of knowledge was formidable.

Mark came to EDAS to deliver talks which were always full of information, but were delivered with erudition, wit and humour. He was our archaeological consultant for the Worth and Druce projects, visiting the sites regularly, providing specialist reports, and preparing hundreds of drawings for publication.

Mark led the 2017 field trip to Hadrian's Wall and was the perfect guide, organising the site visits, and seamlessly blending huge amounts of information in the most amusing, entertaining and memorable way.

Dr Malcolm Lyne

Malcolm came to archaeology in his 40s after working at financial institutions in London and after gaining a Ph.D. for the study of the north-east Hampshire Roman potteries. He soon gained a reputation for his encyclopaedic knowledge of Roman pottery and, of particular relevance for us in Dorset, the local Black Burnished Ware forms.

He produced seminal reports for the pottery production site at Bestwall Quarry, and for the Late Iron Age and Roman assemblages from Worth Matravers. Most recently, he reported on the material from the Roman Villa at Druce Farm, where his identification of the pottery was fundamental, allowing us to precisely date the various phases of the villa buildings.

He was an exceptional scholar with wide ranging interests, and liked nothing more than a good chat and rant! He never learned to drive but still managed to visit sites all over Britain and Europe, and made significant contributions to the field of Roman pottery studies.

Lilian Ladle



At Chesters Fort, cheerful in the rain with Lilian's hat; he'd forgotten his (2017)



Discussing mosaics with Janet Bartlet (Druce 2013)

The Maritime Archaeology of Poole Bay: Lecture by Tom Cousins

Tom is the Diving and Maritime Archaeology Officer at Bournemouth University, where maritime archaeology has been taught since 2004 and Tom graduated in 2009. His presentation covered the whole of man's seafaring past as represented by the wrecks and remains in and around the bay.

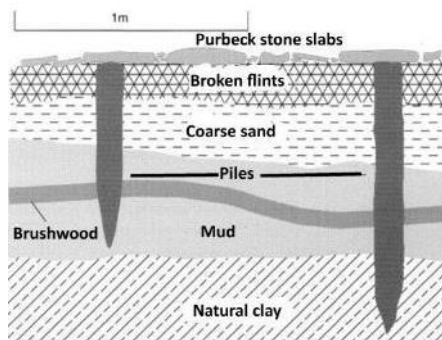
Poole Harbour is said to be the second largest in the world, a claim so often repeated that it has become a 'truth', even though it isn't true – think of San Francisco, Sydney and Chichester, to name a few. A couple of million years ago it was part of the Solent River, flowing eastwards from the Frome. The chalk ridge from Purbeck to the Isle of Wight seems to have been breached in places around 120,000 years ago, with rivers then flowing southwards. However, Poole Bay wasn't flooded until about 9,000 years ago, a few hundred years before the British Isles were cut off from mainland Europe.

With south-westerly prevailing winds, Poole Bay is quite sheltered, with Studland Bay a particularly good anchorage. Sailing ships can't go in straight lines, but have to tack back and forth. To get a shipwreck the ship has to bump into something and the relatively shallow Hook Sand bar, stretching 2km from the harbour entrance, is all too easy to hit. There are a lot of wrecks. Wood floats, of course, so it's often just cargoes that end up on the seabed, though the sand and mud in the bay preserves buried remains well.



We know there was Bronze Age seagoing trade along this coast with, for example, Cornish tin traded at least as far as Turkey (e.g. found in the Uluburun wreck). Traded Bronze Age artefacts have been found in the harbour entrance and at Hengistbury (though the Bronze Age port hasn't yet been found), so there are almost certainly wrecks in Poole Bay. Perhaps, as in a similar situation at Salcombe, they are hiding under later wreck remains.

The so-called Green Island Causeway of around 300BC seems to have been the site of an Iron Age port.



Excavated around 2000 but never published (though now being worked on), it is actually two well-built structures that might better be called moles, the longest 160m long running north-east from near Cleavel Point, where there was a late Iron Age and Romano-British industrial complex (see May 2023 newsletter). The other was across the channel, stretching 55m from Green Island. Whilst neither now reach dry land, and are underwater at high tide, sea levels were rather lower when they were built.

The port could well have been the base for the Iron Age logboat of a similar date, now in Poole Museum, found close to the 'causeway' through dredging work in 1964. Recovery work didn't use the best techniques, and cost considerations delayed full conservation and then resulted in preservation by immersion in sugar solution, which had proved effective in other cases but not without risks. Hewn from a single oak log and 10m long, studies have shown it could have had a crew of up to around 18 people, or cargo of about 2 tons, and there is evidence that it may have had sails. Usable within Poole Harbour, although rather long to easily turn in rivers, it may have been able to safely reach Hengistbury and Durlleston Heads on calm days. Iron Age shipping is also evidenced by the 1.6m long anchor found at Bulbury Camp in 1881 with 6.5m of iron chain.



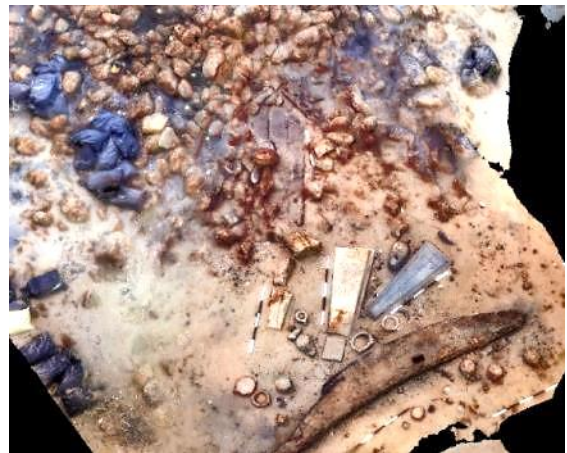
No Roman shipwrecks have been found but they're almost certainly there. Hamworthy was a Roman port from the invasion period, and huge amounts of Black Burnished ware were shipped across Britain from the kilns around the harbour, notably those excavated at Bestwall. Purbeck marble artefacts were also high status goods in the Roman period, whilst pottery from Poole was found in a Roman wreck near Guernsey. Much of this probably came from or through the Cleavel Point site.

Wareham was the main settlement in the early medieval period, and it is recorded that the Viking army overwintered there in 875, with massed Viking ships in the river and harbour. Apparently 120 of their ships were lost off Swanage in a storm as they made for Exeter (some suggest a battle, as Tom said was shown in the TV adaptation of Bernard Cornwell's *Last Kingdom*, with mountains in the background!). However, no shipwrecks from this period have been found in Poole Bay or Harbour, though 10th century Saxon pottery has been recovered from Hook Sand.



In the medieval period, from 1066 to the Black Death in 1347/8, population rose from about 1.5 to 5 million, and trade expanded. Medieval Purbeck marble fonts, tombs and gravestones are found in hundreds of churches across the country, like King John's tomb in Worcester Cathedral shown in the last newsletter. The distribution of Purbeck marble artefacts near the European coasts, even one in northern Italy, clearly shows that they were shipped. No doubt sea transport was used for part of the routes to British sites, given the state of roads then. Yet no wrecks from this period were known until 2019.

The site of what is now known as the 'Mortar Wreck', on the opposite site of the main channel from the end of Hook Sand, has long been known as an obstruction – a "boring pile of stones". A local skipper investigated it and then a Bournemouth University (BU) team surveyed the site, followed by excavations, and uncovered timbers dating to the mid-13th century. It's actually the oldest known medieval wreck with timber remaining in England. Some of the Irish oak hull has bark on it, so that further excavations, planned for next summer, should allow wood to be lifted and an exact date for the tree felling to be found.



The wreck gets its name from the large number of Purbeck marble mortars found, as well as Purbeck limestone and two complete marble cross slabs and some fragments; one has a cross very similar to that on the one Vanessa found (see article below). There's a Time Team video on *You Tube* to tell you more.



There are at least three more 'boring piles of stone' that may hide similar wrecks. There's then evidence of boatbuilding in Poole from the 1980s excavation on the Poole Iron Foundry site, which found a late 14th/early 15th century store of boat timbers. We are now reaching a period where the frequency of known wrecks increases.

The Studland Bay Wreck was found in 1983 after fishing nets snagged on the seabed, and thought to be a lightly armed Iberian merchant vessel of c.1525. Only a small amount of cargo has been recovered, but it included a good deal of Sevillian lustreware. One cannon was also found, still loaded, but the sizes of cannonballs suggest the ship had more, and it might be the *Santa Maria del Luce*, from which 9 cannon were recovered in about 1546.



The Armada ship *San Salvador* was lost in Studland Bay in 1588, though has never been found. This may be because the location is wrong, as accounts differ and don't always make sense. For example, though it had been captured after an explosion and towed to Weymouth, one account says it foundered on the way to Portland, clearly in the wrong direction for Studland.

The well-known Swash Channel Wreck was first found in 1990, but serious interventions didn't start until 2004, initially under Wessex Archaeology and then the university – said to be the largest underwater

excavation since the Mary Rose. Almost all of one side survived of this armed Dutch merchantman, including rigging that is rarely found. There was no cargo, but a large amount of personal and practical items for the ship's



25 mm

operation. Tom said no records of the owner had been found, though he could be the man here carved on top of the rudder post. Some websites say she was the *Fame*, known to have been

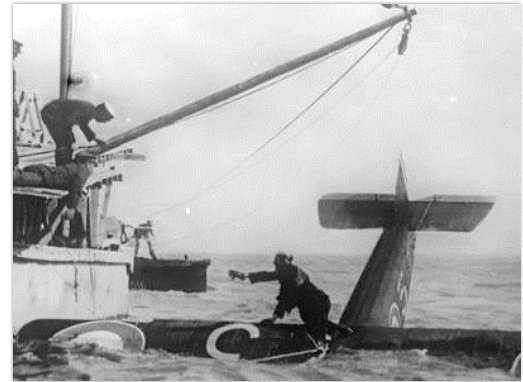


lost in the bay during a storm in 1631, but Tom talked of the Harbour Commissioners failing to find the owner in 1630. Whilst there used to be a great deal of information on Poole Museum's website, that is down until they re-open (2025?), so we'll have to wait for publication of BU's definitive report, expected fairly soon.

Many wrecks are known from the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly sailing ships along Hook Sand, often with their locations known fairly closely, though not necessarily ever examined in any detail. Apparently, stone barges on their way from Purbeck to London often foundered on the cliffs, with a more famous tragedy in that area. In 1786 the East Indiaman *Halsewell* lost its masts and was driven onto the shore. Only 74 of the 240 people onboard survived, the losses including the captain, his two daughters and two nieces. It inspired a painting by JMW Turner.



The poorly preserved remains of a WWI towing lighter lie on the shoreline in Brands Bay, south of Brownsea; it's one of the earliest aircraft carriers, of which only two others are known. Towing could give them sufficient speed for planes like the Sopwith Camel

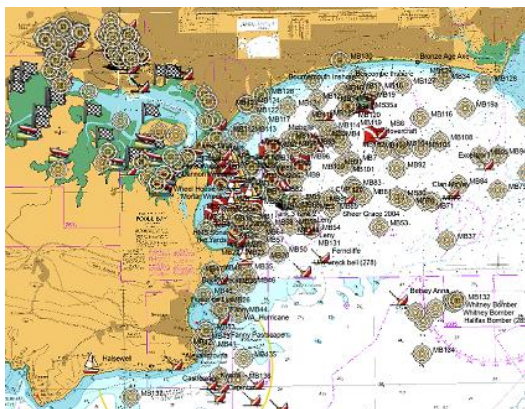


to take off, and allowed longer distance raids towards the end of WWI, including shooting down a Zeppelin off the Dutch coast. Landing was a different matter, though recovery of the pilot, and even the plane, were usually accomplished.



Unsurprisingly, there are a lot of WWII, remains in and around the bay. Probably the most famous are the Valentine amphibious tanks in Studland Bay. The tanks were nicknamed 'Donald Ducks' for 'DD', or Duplex Drive – adding a propeller for use in water. Valentine tanks were tried first as they were relatively light, and used for most of the training, but it was realised that Shermans (left) were far better. Despite the loss of the Valentines off Studland in a training exercise, the waterproofed canvas

screen proved very effective in action. One of the reasons that



casualties at Omaha Beach were so high on D-Day was that they weren't used



there. Of the seven underwater, five were blown up by the Navy and much has 'disappeared' from the remaining two.

As Tom concluded, a great deal remains to be found, with many sites, or likely sites, known but not fully investigated because of the lack of time and funds.

Geoff Taylor

Taking a closer look at pottery from Dorset



Sixteen 'students' attended the 18th November EDAS study day at the Museum of East Dorset led by Dan Carter, who has spent the last seven years completing a PhD in Archaeology at Bournemouth University, specialising in the medieval and later pottery created within Dorset.

The day started with an examination of Anglo-Saxon wares, moving on to examples created in all corners of the county during the medieval period, and ending with products from the later post-medieval period,



including what is often termed Verwood pottery. We were able to handle and examine different pottery types and learn how experts identify them through fabric, form and science. Dan also demystified jargon and explained some of the more advanced scientific methods used by ceramic specialists today.

(We are very confident that the title Dr will be added to Dan's name very soon.)

Vanessa Joseph

King John's visits to Dorset

I was particularly interested in King John's visits to Dorset summarised in *From the Archives 13* in the last newsletter, a subject I spent time researching during lockdown. I also discovered that historian Dr John Porter had done a similar exercise some years ago, recording his findings in one of his books on Gillingham. I can only applaud the efforts of the Rev William Miles Barnes, who had to wade through the State papers of John's reign without any help from computers or the internet.

In fact, though not in last month's article, Rev Barnes' paper in the Proceedings vol. XV (1894) does mention some of the difficulties of finding information, even though facsimiles of many of the State papers were then available. For example, whether each letter in the Close Rolls relates to Dorset is clear from the first words, but that isn't the case for the Patent Rolls. He therefore had to read thousands of handwritten letters in abbreviated Latin. In Proceedings XIV, Rev Barnes had written a paper about the Pipe Rolls with an extract from 1160-1161 in Henry II's reign, partly reproduced here, which gives an idea of the effort and knowledge involved.



The middle line is translated by Rev Barnes as:
 "And in livery, to the keeper of the King's houses at Gillingham, 30s 5d."

DORSETIA
 W ARTER de l'Eschiers reth Comp. de fyma de BonSeca
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I didn't even get round to looking at most of the Pipe Rolls. My numerical totals of John's visits is therefore bound to differ from those of Barnes, and also from those of Porter. I found at least 20 places in Dorset that John visited, whilst Barnes provided an extract from "an Itinerary compiled by Sir T. D. Hardy [which] may be accepted as absolutely reliable" that also lists visits to 20 places. Porter only noted 10 places and calculated that he stayed for a total of 263 nights (about 9 months).

In the last newsletter the most popular places John visited were stated as Gillingham (24), Corfe (23), Cranborne (19), Bere Regis (16), Dorchester (15) and Canford (12), where a visit was a stay at (or near) a particular town for a day or more. My list differs from Barnes' in some respects, though some differences are only a matter of interpretation. You may, though, be interested in a few examples.

Barnes mentions a visit to Charborough on 24 July 1204, appearing to give the spelling as "Karebroc", which is a puzzle. The Survey of English Place-Names [here](#) gives about 30 historical forms of the name, including "Cheleberge" from the Patent Rolls in 1204 and "Chauberg(e)" from the Curia Regis Rolls in 1206. However, on 23 July John had been at Ludgershall and on 24 July appeared at Heytesbury, just 4 miles beyond Chitterne, all three in Wiltshire. Chitterne was a credible stopping-point since it was owned by William Longespée, Earl of Salisbury and Baron of Chitterne, a half-brother of John. Charborough, 28 miles south, really doesn't fit with these dates – Chitterne clearly would.

John seems to have visited Cranborne around 20 times [I (Geoff) miscounted Barnes' visits last time and it's actually 20]. Cranborne had the motte and bailey castle shown (and just added to the Heritage at Risk Register!), so presumably he would have stayed there. After some years he had a fortified hunting lodge built in Cranborne, which was still there 400 years later when a subsequent Earl of Salisbury modified the hunting lodge and created Cranborne Manor House; the main walls of King John's lodge are probably extant in the manor building we see today. John was a fanatical huntsman and, of course, Cranborne Chase was nearby, but that was very extensive and to reach many parts of it could have taken some time.



Since many of the visits to "Cranborne" only appear to have been for a single day (or night) wouldn't it have made more sense to save travelling time and stay somewhere more central? Was the name "Cranborne" sometimes just shorthand for "Cranborne Chase"? And was John really staying more centrally at Tollard Royal where he was overlord of the manor, and where today we still have the King



John Inn, and the so-called King John's House pictured, the core of which could date back to the 13th century? I did not come up with a single mention of John staying at Tollard, and although references to a hunting lodge at Cranborne continue until the time of Henry VIII, I would suggest that some of these continued references may also really refer to Tollard, 12km north-west of Cranborne.

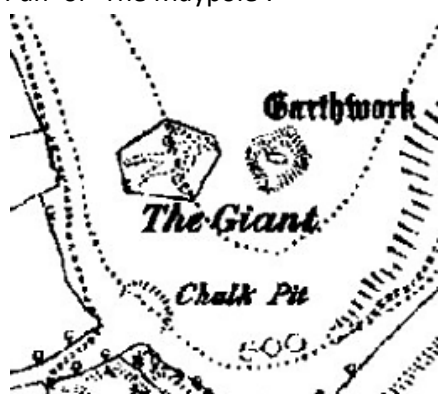
John visited Corfe almost as often as Gillingham, and often for longer periods. The first visit of which there's a record was in 1205, though I feel sure he must have paid earlier visits, since the records of royal expenditure show £275 spent on works on the royal apartments at Corfe in the years 1201 to 1202, and a further £477 between 1202 and 1205 (in the region of £460,000 and £800,000 now). During his reign, John spent over £1,400 doing up Corfe Castle, at a time when it is suggested that a complete castle of medium size might be built for less than £2,000. If we look outside Dorset there may be an explanation. John stayed at Christchurch (until 1974 still in Hampshire), sometimes for two or three days, in the years 1200, 1204 and 1205, and this might well have been a useful stop on his route from Winchester until Corfe came up to the standard he intended.

Graham Hoddinott

Cerne Abbas Giant (GT)

Clearly a well-recognised 'symbol' of Dorset, and a well-regarded visitor attraction, but there's little to add about this 55m high figure since the long article in the 2021 Midsummer Newsletter (see website). It didn't mention that the giant was camouflaged with brushwood in the Second World War to remove a possible landmark for enemy aircraft.

This aerial photograph by Sue Newman and Jo Crane is, though, an excellent picture of him in his hexagonal enclosure. It's also good in showing the rectangular enclosure at the top of the hill (possibly Iron Age), usually called 'The Trendle' but sometimes 'The Frying Pan' or 'The Maypole'.



The enclosure is a rectangular level platform 23m x 19m cut into the slope, surrounded by a double bank and ditch with banks up to 1.8m high. A rectangular mound is centrally placed on the platform, 15m x 10m wide and 0.7m high. As intimated, the exact date and function of the enclosure is unclear, with interpretations including a temple, burial mound or maypole site.

Nearby there's a Bronze Age bowl barrow and a large oval Iron Age enclosure with bank and ditch; internally it has the remains of house platforms and storage pits. There are more platforms and pits outside the enclosure and the remains of a field system associated with the settlement, as well as a linear earthwork thought to be a boundary related to the settlement.

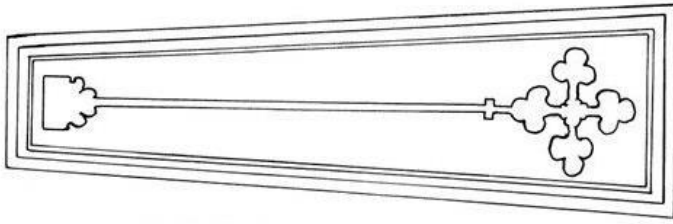
Medieval cross slab, Wimborne All Hallows (VJ)

This Purbeck marble grave slab, found and reburied during EDAS's archaeological excavation at Wimborne All Hallows churchyard in 2021, gives us a rare glimpse of a high status medieval burial. It is significant for the unusual points of detail in its carving and for its completeness and state of preservation. Its discovery and recording by EDAS and experts in the field adds to the corpus of knowledge of these medieval monuments.

The cross slab was found close to the foundations of the south wall of the nave, the preferred place for burials. During the 1200s it would have been a prestigious and expensive monument, commemorating a person of status and wealth, well known in the community. At that period there were no inscriptions and, unfortunately, no records have been found which give us a clue about the buried individual. Tantalising remains of other marble slabs pointed to more than one high status burial in the churchyard.



The cross slab has the trademark double hollow chamfered edges of Purbeck marble slab carvers. It measures 2.12m by 0.39m at the top, tapering to 0.29m at the bottom, is orientated correctly east-west and believed to be in situ. The design is a relief straight arm cross with relatively large trefoil terminals and a moulded centre of a four petalled flower. This is a transitional or hybrid design: a variation on



known types as documented by Brian and Moira Gittos in their Survey of Purbeck Marble Coffin-Shaped Slabs.

Its most significant feature is the cross base, which resembles a section through an architectural moulding rather than the conventional, expected 'stepped calvary'

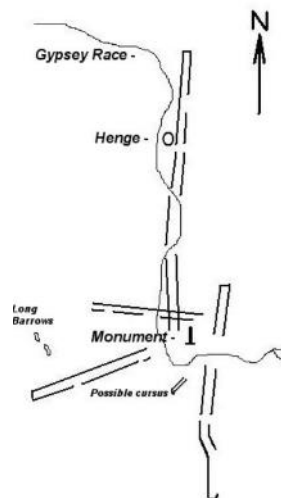
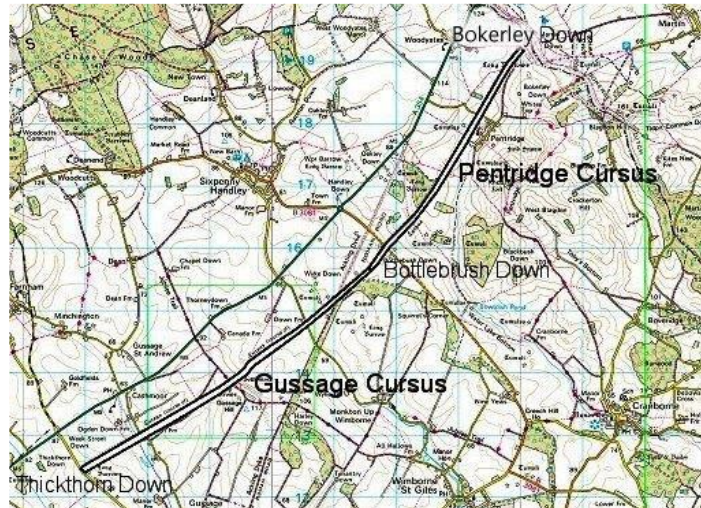
type. A moulded base is extremely rare; the best example was found in the 1930s on the site of Meaux Abbey and attributed by the excavator to the tomb of Baldwin de Béthune who died in 1212. Dating the Wimborne All Hallows slab is not straightforward. The cross base design could be early 13th century, although the transitional design of the cross head indicates that it belongs to the later 13th century.

Purbeck marble is not a true marble but a very distinctive polishable limestone, used extensively for special purposes in the medieval period. Two well preserved Purbeck marble cross slab gravestones, with different designs, were discovered in 2020 on the 'Mortar Wreck' in Poole Bay by the team of marine archaeologists from Bournemouth University (see the Maritime Archaeology article above). These never reached their destination but suggest a demand for the highly skilled stonemasons and their products.

Dorset Cursus (GT)

It seems that I had a couple of easier items to write about this month since, as with the Giant, the Dorset Cursus was fairly comprehensively covered in View from Above 34 & 35 (February & March 2021), and is mentioned in various contexts in several other newsletters.

The Neolithic cursus is certainly a good representative for Dorset, as the longest in Britain at 10km (though actually two cursuses end to end). It shows evidence of complex planning and organisation, communal effort and, presumably, shared beliefs. And, still, we don't really know what it was for.



At least 50 cursus monuments are known in Britain, many detected from crop marks; no doubt, others are still to be found. Most date from the centuries around 3500BC, and I've just picked a few examples below.

The Stonehenge Cursus is about 3km long, though should really be called 'Greater' as a lesser one, 400m long, lies to its north-west. At Rudston, about 10km west of Bridlington in Yorkshire, the four (perhaps five) cursuses shown roughly converge on the Rudston Stone in the churchyard, the longest about 2.7km. The Stone, 7.6m high, is the tallest prehistoric monolith in the UK and seems to date to later than the cursus group. An excavation was started only a few months ago on a cursus on the Isle of Arran involving archaeologists from several universities, including Bournemouth. It's about 1.1km long, defined by a stone, earth and turf bank, within a prehistoric landscape of field boundaries, cairns and roundhouses. It may be linked to the 'Machrie Moor' complex, which includes stone and timber circles, standing stones and burial cairns. The cursus is said to be the best preserved in Britain, as it lies in a peat landscape where both the original Neolithic land surface and subsequent Bronze Age soils are preserved.

Ghostly painted tales at Tarrant Crawford (VJ)

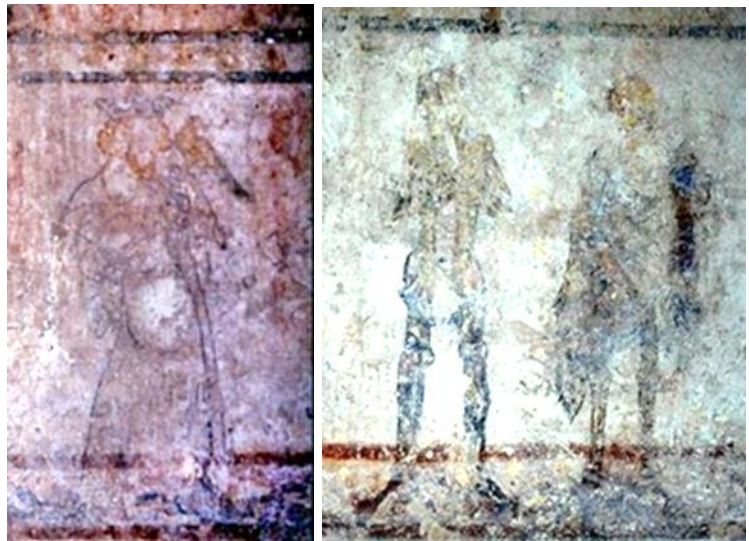
The Church of St Mary at Tarrant Crawford, dating back to the 12th century, is all that remains of a wealthy Cistercian nunnery. We visited the church as part of our background research for the Wimborne All Hallows excavation. Today, the most outstanding feature of the church is the series of wall paintings dating mostly from the 14th century, made to teach biblical stories, give moral instructions and inspire illiterate congregations. They were rediscovered in 1910–11, and fully uncovered and treated in 1948–49 by archaeologist E Clive Rouse.



It is unusual for such an early set of paintings to survive, albeit damaged. The earliest, in the chancel, is from the late 13th century – a simple masonry pattern with five-petalled roses. The paintings on the north wall are more fragmentary, but you can identify St Michael weighing souls and St Christopher carrying the Christ Child. Above the piscina, in the south-east corner of the nave, is a 14th century painting of the Annunciation of St Mary.

The paintings on the south wall of the nave are divided into two tiers. The upper tier depicts the life of St Margaret of Antioch, reputed to have been swallowed by a dragon. She was one of the most popular saints in the later Middle Ages, although there is no evidence that she existed. Her life, portrayed in no less than 14 scenes, was considered by Clive Rouse to be the most extensive and complete such portrayal in England. It seems possible that her presence in the church had something to do with the nearby abbey.

The lower tier illustrates a morality story. Three kings or princes, out hawking, come upon three animated skeletons who warn them of the emptiness of earthly rank and riches. One of the 'Three Living', shown here, has a hawk on his wrist. The 'Three Dead' were painted with great skill, and the skeletal structure shows a very well-informed understanding of anatomy, particularly evident in the knees and pelvic girdle of the central figure (left in the photograph), if not all that clear in the photograph.



Inside Tarrant Crawford church are several 13th and 14th century coffin lids, mostly of Purbeck marble with carved crosses. Their designs are conventional, unlike the cross slab found at Wimborne All Hallows. The claim that these relate to the burials of Bishop Poore and Queen Joan is pure conjecture, and they are most likely to have belonged to abbesses or nuns from the abbey.

Weblink Highlights November 2023

It is quite apposite, following Tom Cousins' talk on the archaeology of Poole Bay, that there should be an item about the Valentine tanks (included in his talk) being placed on the 'at risk' register.

There seems to be no end to theories about Stonehenge, and this month three more are featured in Weblinks. Two of the items explore 'new' ideas on its purpose, whilst the other is about who built it. This, of course, should surprise nobody given the enduring fascination with this enigmatic structure, so expect yet more revelations in the coming months! There is also a fourth item about the new analysis of the cremated remains found in the Aubrey holes. They were found in various Aubrey holes, but redeposited in a single hole with nothing to identify the individual burials. This story also repeats the notion that the Aubrey holes were the first site of the bluestones. This idea is disputed by other archaeologists, as no evidence of bluestones (chippings, etc.) has ever been found in the Aubrey holes. Some also dispute that the shaping of the Aubrey holes identifies them as having held stones at all.

The item on prehistoric skull surgery using stone tools is not the first time this procedure has been identified, but it still causes me to shudder at the very thought of it.

Much of the commentary on the cancellation of Rishi Sunak's meeting with Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the Greek Prime Minister, overlooked the earlier statement by George Osborne. The whole episode is covered in the *Greek City Times* by a 'guest contributor'.

The item about Vikings in the Americas appeared on the MSN news page in November, but I am not sure why because the publication date of the original article on the IFL Science website was back in April.

Alan Dedden

November Weblinks - No. 62

Sphinx Origins Laid Bare After Unexpected Clue Emerges [here](#)

Stonehenge's 'True Purpose' Revealed - Again! [here](#)

And Again! (not the same as above) [here](#)

Medieval Skeleton With Prosthetic Hand Found In Freising, Germany [here](#)

500 Year-Old Lion Drawing Found In Puerto Rican Cave [here](#)

1,400 Year-Old Temple Found In Royal Settlement In Suffolk [here](#)

Roman Road Used By Historical Figures Found In Garden In Stirling [here](#)

5,000 Year-Old Mass Grave In Spain Shows Evidence Of 'Sophisticated Warfare' [here](#)

Up To 50,000 Roman Coins Discovered Off Coast Of Sardinia [here](#)

French Letters Confiscated By British Navy Opened After 265 Years [here](#)

Over 100,000 Ancient Coins Found In Japan, Some More Than 2,000 Years Old [here](#)

Valentine Tanks In Studland Bay Added To 'At Risk' Register [here](#)

4,500 Year-Old Skull Reveals Copper Age Woman Survived 2 Skull Surgeries [here](#)

Evidence Of Vikings In Americas Long Before Columbus [here](#)

Excavation On Notorious St Pancras Workhouse Sheds New Light On Conditions [here](#)

Well Preserved Evidence Of Roman Life Found In Newark [here](#)

120 Million Year Old Bird Tracks Found In Australia [here](#)

3,000 Year-Old Stela Discovered In Spain Upends Gender Stereotypes [here](#)

The Elgin Marbles [here](#) and [here](#)

Cult Temples And Sacrificial Pit Unearthed In Roman Camp In Germany [here](#)
Stone Box Grave Discovered In Norway Could Provide Evidence On How Agriculture Came [here](#)
Over 3,000 Roman Coins And Gems Unearthed In Claterna, Italy [here](#)
Three-Toed Dinosaur Footprint Found On Brownsea Island [here](#)
Stonehenge Discoveries Analysed After Almost Being Destroyed By Earlier Excavator [here](#)
Important Stained Glass Window In Church Near Peterborough Saved [here](#)
Egyptian Treasures Found Buried In The Grounds Of A Scottish School [here](#)
Museum Reclassifies Roman Emperor As Trans Woman [here](#)
Historians Discover Secrets Of UK's Cold War Early Warning Station At RAF Fylingdales [here](#)
Satellite Imagery Reveals Bronze Age Settlement In Serbia [here](#)
5 Mummies Found In 3,500 Year-Old Temple In Lima [here](#)
Buried Ancient Fenland Yew Trees Give Climate Change Insight [here](#)
2,000 Year-Old Coin Stash Found In Buddhist Stupa At Mohenjo-Daro [here](#)
Sycamore Gap Tree Felling - The Story So Far At 16th November [here](#)
6,500 Year-Old Burials Found Near The Arctic Circle In Finland [here](#)
Prehistoric Sailors Responsible For Stonehenge? [here](#)

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View from Above 58: Coney's Castle

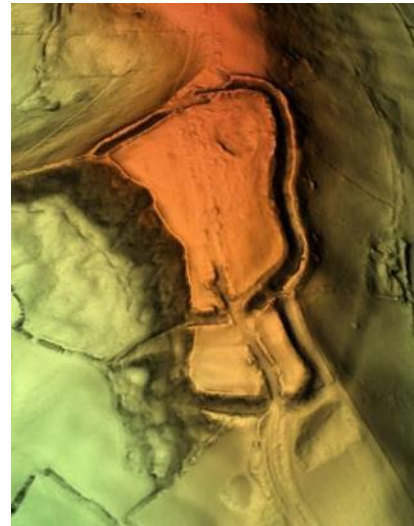
*Photo by Sue Newman
and Jo Crane*



Coney's Castle Iron Age hillfort is almost at the western edge of Dorset, about 4.5km north of Charmouth and close to the larger Lambert's Castle hillfort to the north. With coney as an old name for rabbit, its name could mean that there was a medieval rabbit warren there. However, Dave Stewart, in his talk of May 2019, felt it may well be a corruption of the Saxon word *cyning*, i.e. king, rather than relate to rabbits, as it is recorded that King Egbert camped here in 831 on his way to fight the Cornish.

The schedule describes it as "a small multivallate hillfort with outworks", with a total enclosed area of about 4ha (10 acres). It's at the southern end of a prominent ridge which drops away particularly steeply to the west (left of the two cultivated areas on the left – Google Earth shows these crossed with parallel lines, perhaps from cutting the grass). That side has only a single rampart bank, whilst the rest has large double rampart banks with a ditch between them.

Not so obvious from the photograph, but clearer on the digital terrain model, is that the single track road seen at the north crosses the hillfort under the line of trees down to the bottom right of the picture. It's actually part of the Wessex Ridgeway. The reversed 'C' of trees to the right follows the main part of the double ramparts, crossing the road north of the outworks, which continue to the south slightly beyond the bottom of the photograph. It isn't clear whether Coney's Castle was a larger hillfort reduced in size, a smaller hillfort extended or a single construction.



You can see evidence of what is said by Historic England to be gravel quarrying in the north-east corner of the hillfort, though Dave



Stewart said that chert

quarrying has much reduced signs of habitation. There's a parking area alongside the road at the north. The views over Marshwood Vale to the east, and Devon to the west, are extensive, and Golden Cap can be seen in the distance to the south. The ancient oak and beech woodland around the ramparts

is said to be a fine place for a walk and picnic, and well known for bluebells in Spring.

Geoff Taylor/Jo Crane

Early castles in Britain 2

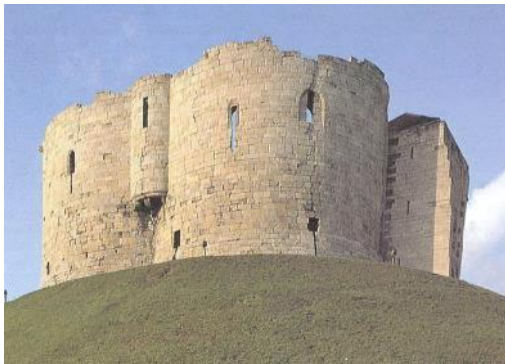
As with Goltho in Lincolnshire in the previous article, mottes weren't actually common initially, and not needed if you had a strong site; for example, neither Chepstow nor Corfe have them. We tend, though, to think of Norman castles as 'motte and bailey' as the earthworks generally survive well and remain common.

Most of the earliest castles, as well as the vast majority of those built over the next century or more, were of timber. Stone castles, even just a tower keep, were expensive and most were initially built by the king. Timber castles could be impressive, but the main problem was obviously fire, and not just from possible attackers. Fire was the main cause of losses of early medieval castles.



A view from the outer to the inner bailey and keep of Stafford Castle. The wooden buildings are intended to show how impressive timber castles could look, based mostly on evidence from castles other than Stafford.

Clearly, building on a motte made your castle bigger and higher – much more impressive and intimidating. However, building even a timber keep on an artificial mound requires careful construction of the mound, and a period of settlement, if the walls aren't to lean outwards over time. I've always thought that the cracks in Clifford's Tower in York (below) were due to a poorly constructed mound, though they may also relate to periodic flooding from the nearby River Ouse.



concerns – like those at Middleton Stoney (Oxfordshire, as shown) and Sulgrave (Northamptonshire), on flat sites and shown by excavation to be over Anglo-Saxon manors.

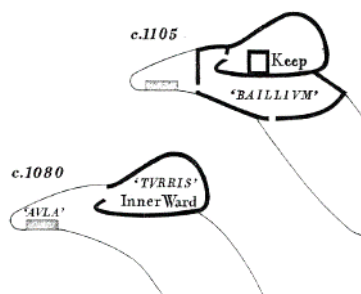
Given the preparedness to destroy houses, the siting of urban castles was thought important, as we saw before. In general, though, positioning was a local consideration, based on the land owned by the builder. There are very few instances where land was exchanged to obtain a castle site, though Corfe is an exception, the land having been exchanged with the nuns of Shaftesbury Abbey for the valuable church at Gillingham.



Even a timber motte and bailey castle required a good deal of resources. Why, then, were they built in their hundreds in relatively rural sites? It seems unlikely that such castles were really needed to protect Norman landlords against rebellious tenants, and they were equally unlikely to withstand a determined assault by a well-armed enemy. In either case the length of time to complete such castles, especially to build a strong keep, meant they were of limited use against an immediate threat. These castles were, as with Goltho, a matter of prestige and authority, as much as of military

Unlike Corfe, few castles were actually on hilltops, but more on valley sides or spurs – accessibility and visibility to the populace seem to have been more important than strictly defensive considerations. Also, in most cases, siting was not based on any grand military strategy, even for the grander castles like Richmond (pictured). Although it is imposingly sited on the south, high over the River Swale, entry from the town is level and it was built as the centre for an estate.

Keeps, like the square keep at Richmond, were usually the first thing to be built in stone, and could be early if the ground was solid and no motte was needed, e.g. the White Tower in London dates from the 1070s. Of course, the keep was important to the lord (or king), providing both privacy and safety, as well as a place to hold documents, wealth and prisoners. But a castle was the fortified and defensible home of a rich man, who would have been used to a high level of comfort, and there was a clear conflict between comfort and security. The castle had also to satisfy the ego of, no doubt, an ambitious man carving out an estate in a potentially hostile country, often expressed in aesthetics – the ‘look’ of the castle.



It does seem that security, i.e. the military aim of the castle, was often compromised for reasons of comfort or aesthetics. Chepstow (seen on our 2018 Field Trip) appears to have had amongst the earliest stone building of any Norman castle, but it was a hall rather than a keep. The same applied at Richmond and at Corfe, where the stone hall ('Aula') that replaced the Saxon hall was probably completed around 1080 but the keep not finished for perhaps another 25 years. Heddingham keep in Essex, probably built around 1130 and shown here, has been described as little more than “a pair of grand reception



rooms". Aiming for more comfort wasn't surprising, though, in that owners knew their castle would spend the vast majority of its time at peace.



Norwich Castle has often been considered one of the most beautiful of Norman castles, with its elegant external decoration, but its openings were cut for lighting rather than their fields of fire. In fact, it epitomises the way that military considerations could be swept aside for other reasons. The large square keep was almost ubiquitous in early stone castles, e.g. excavation has shown that Wareham had one about 22m square, probably built fairly early in the 12th century. However, the design suffered from many problems militarily. Corners produced both

dead (i.e. invisible) ground and weak points potentially able to be undermined or otherwise damaged. The lack of protruding towers meant that the only means of firing on ground near the keep was from the roof, so wooden galleries were hung on projections from the walls, with obvious potential issues. Windows were, similarly, weak points, whilst hollows in the walls for stairs, chimneys and sanitation further weakened the structure. Floors could be vaulted stone but this was costly, so wooden floors were much more common even though they exposed the keep to fire and collapse.

So, most early castles were, initially at least, of timber, weakened by the risk of fire. Whilst siting was thought important for the major urban castles built by the king, it seems that the military capability of many castles was also compromised by their siting, construction and design. More on this in the next article.

Geoff Taylor

EDAS PROGRAMME 2023-24

Unless stated lectures are at 7:30pm at St Catherine's Church Hall, Lewens Lane, Wimborne, BH21 1LE.

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 STARTS 7:45 PLEASE DON'T ARRIVE BEFORE 7:15
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

Note: BNSS haven't had archaeology lectures available to non-members for some time and I don't always check their events. DNHAS lectures only appear here if I'm specifically notified.

Wed 6th December	Stonehenge – What's New: A decade of science and speculation	Wareham Society	Tim Darvill
Thurs 14th December	What's new in the British and Irish Neolithic	DNHAS	Alison Sheridan
2024			
Thurs 18th January	A source of confusion: New Investigations on the Dorchester Roman Aqueduct	AVAS	Harry Manley
Thurs 15th February	Recent results from Avebury	AVAS	Josh Pollard
Thurs 21st March	The Coombe Bissett Landscape Research Project	AVAS	Alyson Tanner and Alix Smith

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: <https://www.dorsetmuseum.org/whats-on/>
Events in Dorchester, usually ticketed and charged unless you're a DNHAS member.
- Wareham and District Archaeology & Local History Society: See 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.