



*Founded 1983*

# East Dorset Antiquarian Society

Charity No: 1171828

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## NEWSLETTER – March 2024

The next meeting is, of course, our (usually quite short) AGM followed by Phil & I speaking about last June's field trip to Kent. That's Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March at 7:30pm. We're still hoping for more nominations for the committee, which you can even do on the night before the 'AGM proper' starts (I will have forms).

Thank you to Phil for the summary of last month's excellent talk by Miles Russell: **Frampton – A lost villa rediscovered**. Of course, these summaries can never tell the full stories that our speakers covered on the night, but Phil has included a link to an article with more information.

I'm grateful to Janet Bartlet for bringing us up to date on Cerne Abbas and the Giant. These, particularly the Giant, have unsurprisingly been mentioned many times in the newsletter – a list is given at the start of the article. Janet's information sometimes, inevitably, covers similar ground to earlier items and may not always agree with them. There are still some mysteries.

Janet has kindly provided a lot of information, so I've split it into three articles, with the first one here: **Recent information about Cerne Abbas 1 – the Giant and Abbey Street**. The two other articles should follow in the next two months, looking at surviving abbey buildings, work to find the lost remains of the abbey and a little on Janet's own house.

Many thanks also to Andrew for his item about a centenary that few, if any, of the readers will know about: **When the women of Wales demanded a 'World Without War'**.

**View from Above** is now on its 61<sup>st</sup> outing, this month's being about **Buzbury Rings**. There's another large edition of **Weblinks** and accompanying **Highlights**, this time the 65<sup>th</sup>. Further thanks to Sue Newman and Jo Crane, and to Alan Dedden of course. I'm really pleased to have so many contributions from members this month, to provide a variety beyond the topics that I might think to write about. More would be very welcome.

**From the Archives 16** cover items in the Dorset Proceedings dated 1898 and 1899, and there's also an article about **The Italian Chapel, Orkney**, which my wife and I visited a couple of years ago. I imagine quite a few readers will know some of this uplifting story.

As usual, the newsletter concludes with the **EDAS Programme** and the **District Diary**, though most local societies aren't announcing speakers very far ahead at present.

*Geoff Taylor*

## Frampton – A lost villa rediscovered: Lecture by Miles Russell

We were pleased to be able to welcome back Dr Miles Russell from Bournemouth University (BU) for our February meeting. The Frampton Villa site that he told us about lies about 9km NW of Dorchester, within a few hundred metres of the course of the Roman aqueduct which fed the town. The villa itself was built on a platform raised above land that later became water meadows fed by the adjacent river Frome, in a location known as Nunnery Mead.

The university were contacted by Dorset Wildlife Trust (who own the land) in 2018, inviting them to assess the site and its state of preservation following its discovery and first excavation in the 1790s. As a Scheduled Ancient Monument, permission had to be sought from Historic England, who agreed to a limited and non-intrusive investigation to discover whether significant remains survived, as records from an early 20<sup>th</sup> century excavation suggested that it had suffered considerable damage, with its mosaics lost.

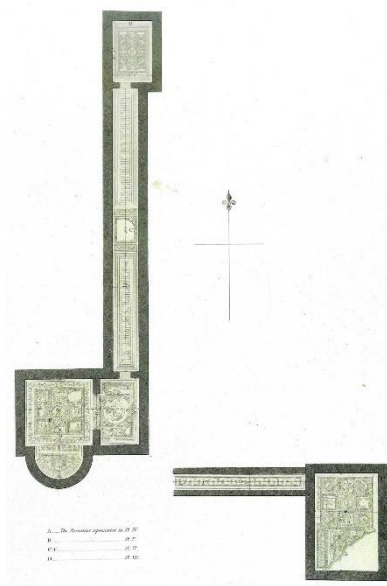


Research revealed that the site was found by workmen searching for flints for construction work in April 1794. We don't know what was uncovered initially but, fortunately, local illustrator James Engleheart heard about the discovery and made a watercolour of a large rectangular mosaic with figured roundels. It was exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries in London in February 1795 and one member, Samuel Lysons, determined to undertake a more extensive investigation of the site. However, it was 10 months before Lysons made his way to Frampton. By then, the site had degraded, most probably because of being left open to the elements as well as becoming the target of souvenir hunters. Sadly, key parts of the mosaic recorded by Engleheart had already disappeared.

Lysons realised that only a small portion of the building had been exposed and that he needed help to do more. He was a well-connected man and petitioned King George III, then on his annual trip to Weymouth, who granted him a party of the Royal Lancashire fencibles regiment to help. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Lysons believed in accurate plans and elevations of what was uncovered, with meticulously detailed recording of mosaics. However, little attention was paid to recording the nature of overburden, stratigraphy, contexts, features and finds, unsurprising given the workforce and the time period when the excavation was undertaken. Frampton was, as was almost universal then, a treasure-hunting and wall-chasing exercise. Other archaeological records, even any sort of details of what was actually done, were non-existent, and only a couple of 'finds' were noted. A sketch by Lysons (above) is the only contemporary view of the excavations.

The mosaics revealed during 1796 were of 'very fine quality', with elaborate designs and numerous scenes and panels featuring mythological figures. The king and queen, and other members of the royal family, duly visited in September. They were clearly sufficiently impressed to provide further support to open more rooms in 1797, this time with a party from the South Gloucestershire regiment of militia. By the time of the second royal visit, later in 1797, five mosaics had been uncovered. It seems that work then ceased and the excavations were, apparently, backfilled.

Lysons published details of the site in 1813, including fine pictures of the mosaics. His plan of the site shows the rooms he uncovered, with one long porticus (corridor) linking rooms with mosaics and another porticus seemingly disconnected (north is actually north-west). The first one he uncovered was that illustrated by Engleheart (bottom right on plan), where Lysons was able to reconstruct the missing parts in outline from Engleheart's details. The central panel had



shown Bacchus, whose loss seems to have been a targeted removal (right and, like other photographs here, cropped to fit and best at higher magnification).

The mosaic in the room with an apse (below; bottom left on plan) seems to show similar targeting, but still had a Chi-Rho Christian symbol and accompanying Latin texts – an extremely rare find. This bi-partite room looks to be an elaborate reception area. The other main mosaic (top on plan) pictured Neptune (perhaps Oceanus) with roundels of the Four Winds. Between the two, to the side of the longer porticus, was what he thought was a hard standing area external to the main walls of the structure. Based on this, his interpretation was that this wasn't a traditional Roman villa but, perhaps, a temple, or rather three linked temples dedicated to water deities.



It wasn't until 1903 that further archaeological excavation of the villa site took place by one Wellbore St Clair Baddely. He had heard from local workmen that the site had been dug and left exposed for a period in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century at the time of the Crimean War, though no records existed. Baddely's investigations revealed only flints and some mortar, and he came to the conclusion that the site must have been damaged and

largely destroyed. However, his records of the three trenches excavated were little better than Lysons', with a very poor sketch map that didn't give clear locations.

And so to 2018, with a core team of Miles plus Dave Stewart, Paul Cheetham and Harry Manley. Their project plan posed a number of key questions:

Initially, to make sense of Lyson's ground plan so as to open trenches across previously identified features. Hence, to discover what, if anything, remained undamaged of the buildings and tessellated pavements, as well as finding signs of archaeology that had been left untouched. Assuming sufficient was left, could they check how accurate Lysons' illustrations were? Clearly, then, the major question (placing the building in its landscape context) was whether to interpret it as a villa or temple(s).

Modern technology in the form of geophysical survey immediately provided a means to partly answer these questions. Results confirmed the general accuracy of the plan that Lysons had drawn up of the features that he had found. It also laid bare the fact that there was still much underlying archaeology that had not been excavated, and suggested that this was probably a winged corridor villa with outbuildings, rather than loosely connected temples. The high quality, number and style of the mosaic pavements suggested that, as a villa, it must have been a place where much entertaining of guests took place, possibly a hunting lodge or some other venue where entertaining was an important activity.



Five small targeted trenches were opened at locations where it was likely that the best information could be obtained to answer the project's key questions. The first one (above) aimed to cross the central

'threshold panel' of the mosaic in the longest 'south to north' porticus and extend into the 'outside' area identified by Lysons. Although it missed the centre by a metre, it confirmed that about 50% of the mosaic survived, here in relatively good condition where it was under a layer of grey (non-Roman) slate and fairly clean soil, which seemed to have been laid for protection. A lack of loose *tesserae* in the overburden suggested that any damage may have come before backfilling. The slate didn't cover the area where the mosaic was lost, which may well relate to the unrecorded mid-19<sup>th</sup> century work.

Importantly, the 'outside' hard standing that Lysons had seen was actually a thin, smooth layer of hard *opus signinum* over mortar. This floor extended to the northernmost edge of the building, with entry to internal room(s) from the central panel. It is suggested that the area was originally a bath suite from the waterproof flooring and finds such as box-flue tile, implying there was a hypocaust as yet to be found. In this trench, the south-eastern outside wall of the porticus is in the position Lyson placed it, but is an unmortared bank of flints, rubble and the non-Roman slate. The opposite wall had regular lower courses but became less structured higher up, and it seems that both may have been attempts to 'beautify' the site for the royal visitors.

A small trench was hand dug (below with Dave Stewart) to check the condition of the Neptune and Four



Winds mosaic (top on Lysons' plan). A fragment of mosaic clearly survived, showing the partially damaged face of one of the winds, as well as part of a dolphin. The surface was uneven, with a good deal of root damage, and the mosaic was very unstable as the mortar bedding had deteriorated. What survived did show inaccuracies in Lysons' drawing, particularly in hairstyle and placement of the conch shell. There is actually a fairly front-facing face rather

than the more three-quarters view in the drawing, as well as fuller, better defined, eyebrows, eyes, nose and lips. Excavation of this image enabled comparison to be made with the design of the eyes of the 'Christ' figure in the Hinton St Mary mosaic, 30km away. This suggested the strong possibility that they were contemporary and had both been designed by the same mosaicist or mosaic school.



The discovery of the internal possible bath suite, together with its external wall, along with the geophysics and other trenches, confirmed conclusively that there are still large parts of the building yet to be discovered, despite Lysons' belief that he had uncovered the whole complex. Finds from this small excavation, like decorated wall plaster and the roof finial shown, give an idea as to how much more could be learnt. It is clear that at least some of the mosaics survive, even if often in a poor state despite some efforts to cover them. Other inaccuracies in Lysons' drawings were also found, though often quite minor, and further attempts at 'beautifying' the site. This seems to point to Lysons being under considerable time pressure, both to release his military workers and to present the site in an easily understandable form for the royal visits.



Miles admitted that he had felt quite emotional when a mosaic first emerged, as it was the first time that he had been present when one was being exposed. He concluded that these recent investigations had answered all the questions in the project plan. However, an issue had been revealed by the work they had done, i.e. whether the state of the site and potential future water damage due to climate change might necessitate a larger scale rescue excavation. He felt reasonably confident that Historic England would allow it, just leaving the question of finding the time and money.

A fuller report (with more/better pictures) on the history and the recent work can be found [here](#).

**Phil D'Eath**

## Recent information about Cerne Abbas 1 – the Giant and Abbey Street

[There are many short references to Cerne in past newsletters, mostly about the Giant. Looking back only as far as 2020, there are also several longer mentions:

- 2020 May *Cerne Abbas Giant Gets a Facemask* – a short piece, self-explanatory!
- 2021 Midsummer *Dating the Giant at Cerne Abbas* – information about the town and Martin Papworth’s work in 2020 firming up the date of the giant, based on earlier information from Janet.
- 2021 September – in Weblinks: 3 links to more information following the Midsummer newsletter.
- 2023 May *St Augustine’s Well, Cerne Abbas* – a short one relating to the abbey.
- 2023 December *Cerne Abbas Giant* – a short item, mostly looking at what’s around the Giant.
- 2024 January *Reinvestigating the Cerne Giant* – a new survey, with some preliminary results, and a more academic look in *Solving the Cerne Giant mystery?*, which I don’t believe it does.]

### The Giant

The figure was dated in 2020 by Martin Papworth and his team to the Early Middle Ages, using optical luminescence. He was further subjected to a geophysical (GPR and earth resistance tomography) survey by Dave Stewart, Paul Cheetham, Mike Allen and numerous volunteers before Christmas last year. One reason was to question whether the Giant originally had a belt, but it seems that any odd marks across his body are due to sheep tracks.



There will be a conference on Saturday 28th September on the Giant and other hill figures in the Dorset Museum. Also, as in the January newsletter, a book about it will then be available.

The potential contradictions of a Saxon Giant, cut into the very steep hill behind the Cerne monastery but perhaps before it was founded, must be considered. Was it pagan or Christian? The figure has to be cleaned every 5-10 years, so the monastery and the parish must have organised this difficult task. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Churchwardens wrote of payment for scouring and cleansing the giant (also, in 1635, they “paid Anthony Thorne, and others, for taking down the Maypole”). The Church obviously believed that he was a religious symbol of hope and continuity. What was the Giant, in fact, representing? What was essential for basic farming and for domestic activities? In other words was the Giant sending the message to be Christian, and to enjoy a vigorous life, and multiply?

### Abbey Street

This street leads past the parish church and a row of Grade 1 listed houses (orange), passing the village pond and ending up at the Abbey remains and the graveyard (the church is also Grade I, whilst nos. 1, 2, 4 & 6 are Grade II or II\*). These houses were built by the monastery before the demolition of the abbey in 1539, and were used as guest houses for visitors. All income from them would have supplemented the abbey’s coffers. The odd-numbered row, pictured below, contains houses of differing sizes, and could be tenanted by traders.



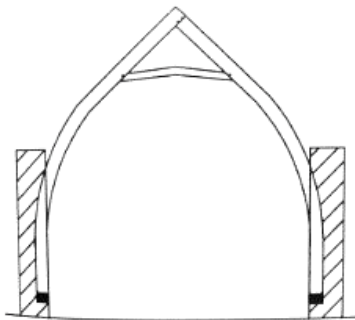
These houses have an unusual building style – they are jettied with their first floor joists overhanging the ground floor. That is obviously seen elsewhere with timber framed buildings, but these have a further feature described below. There are various reasons suggested for jettying – that taxes were levied on the ground floor area, for increasing

the space upstairs, increasing structural stability, for their aesthetic impact, or even because of a local lack of long timbers. However, the real reason remains unclear.

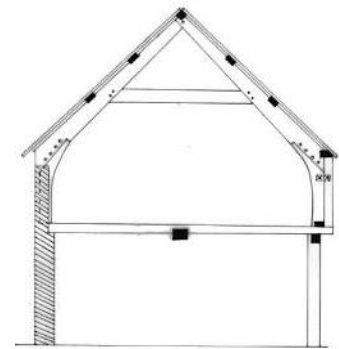


The village market place was in front of the old pub (blue area), The Royal Oak, which was also pre-1500s originally and is at the start of Abbey Street (PH, no. 23). The house at no. 9 was also a licensed pub, The Nags Head, with space to drive through for stabling. This was where Sir Walter Raleigh was tried in 1585. There are examples of jettied dwellings near Sherborne Abbey, and in Tewkesbury. All were monastic buildings, often with shops below and tenements above. A survey of these houses by Harriet Still, with Cerne Abbas Historic Society, Oxford University and Isabel Coghill, was published in 2023. Dating of the house timbers using tree-ring data (dendrochronology) shed more light on the wooden structure and building methods.

The Abbey Street roofs were built with ‘jointed crucks’ in a style particular to south Somerset, Dorset and east Devon. Usually, cruck buildings have a series of pairs of long curved timbers, with each pair joining together at the apex of the roof. The curve then allows the cruck blades to form both the walls and the pitch of the roof as shown left. However, jointed crucks are constructed of two timbers joining together at eaves level with a long tenon joint, where the base of the cruck blade (top timber) stands on the



jettied-out timbers above the ground floor. Here, though, as seen in the diagram right, the houses have back and side walls of masonry, allowing the back cruck blades to sit on them at first floor level. All the houses were examined and found to be designed that way originally.



Some other architectural features of interest were that the front doors were of different widths, perhaps relating to house size or use, but all were tall and narrow. The windows were round headed at the front, which was typical of medieval shops. Also, the moulding of the wooden ceiling beams varied according to the size of house.

Oak timbers to be dated by dendrochronology were drilled so that a core could be extracted to study the growth rings, and compare them with dated samples. The results were that the main roof structure dated to c.1485, which was very similar to other monastic buildings. The timber was probably grown locally.

The Abbey and monastery buildings in Cerne Abbas had almost entirely been demolished by 1539, but luckily these houses were untouched, as were two ‘tithes’ barns. The next article will look at the barns, particularly the North, or ‘Great’ Barn.

### Janet Bartlet

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The CBA Wessex March newsletter is [here](#). Not a great deal in it this time, other than a round-up of society events (we don’t appear this time, perhaps because it’s ‘just’ our AGM). There is, of course, their usual photo quiz on a Wessex monument.

## When the women of Wales demanded a ‘World Without War’

One of the most interesting events I read about recently was the centenary celebration of a remarkable petition that had been organised in 1923 by the women of Wales: a direct appeal to the women of the United States to work together in a call for “**LAW NOT WAR**”. Its purpose was to encourage the United States to join and lead the new League of Nations. The size of the petition was remarkable with **390,296 women** signing, representing 75% of the eligible population of Wales.

Whilst the story of the petition had been forgotten in Wales, it had remained respected in the United States and, since 1923, the petition has been preserved and exhibited by the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC. The petition sheets, which were estimated to measure 7 miles in length if laid end on end, were held in a custom made oak chest.

To mark the centenary the petition and associated material has been gifted by the National Museum of American History to the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, into the safe hands of Prof Mererid Hopwood, chair of the Peace Petition Partnership (with members shown right).



An exhibition is being organised to present the chest and petition at three locations – Aberystwyth, St Fagans National Museum of History near Cardiff, and Wrexham. The petition and associated material is being digitised to enable online access.

The story is really impressive and immediately raised some obvious questions: first, to understand the motivation to undertake such a task; secondly, to understand how the logistical challenges were addressed to initially complete the petition and then to successfully deliver it; and finally, to better understand the sheer ambition and audacity of the venture.

The motivation to undertake a campaign for World Peace is self-evident. It was initiated a mere five years after the horrors of the First World War, the “**War to end War**”. Most families will have suffered the dreadful consequences, and the losses still resonate today. Like many of us, I know of several family members who suffered: I have photographs of two great uncles in uniform, one an unhappy callow youth, the other a decorated hero. Sadly, I also have their burial details after they died on the Western Front. And there are several discreetly told family stories explaining some less obvious, but very difficult, life-changing consequences suffered by the mothers, sisters and widows who were left to pick up the pieces.

The origin of the petition can be traced back to a group of inspirational Welsh women who attended a Welsh League of Nations Union conference at Aberystwyth University. During the conference they agreed to raise a petition from the women of Wales to appeal to the women of the United States of America to work with them for a world without war. Funds were agreed for two paid officers, and 400 local organisers were tasked with the challenge of collecting names from every community in Wales, achieved by local volunteers going door to door. That so many women contributed means that the petition was supported by women from all levels of society, not just the educated elite.

It is no surprise whatsoever that the petition was conceived and delivered by women. This happened during a long period of female activism; in particular, the magnificent Suffragette Movement which had to be extremely well organised and determined in their hard fight to achieve improved rights for women (left below). The photograph (right below) of the Peace Delegation in 1923 reminds me of numerous strong-minded EDAS members who would be quite capable of completing such a task. The image of these proud, determined women, wrapped in their Sunday furs, also reminds me of several relatives who feature in old family photographs from that period.



Intimidating Welsh Suffragettes force men off the road as they campaign for women's right to vote.

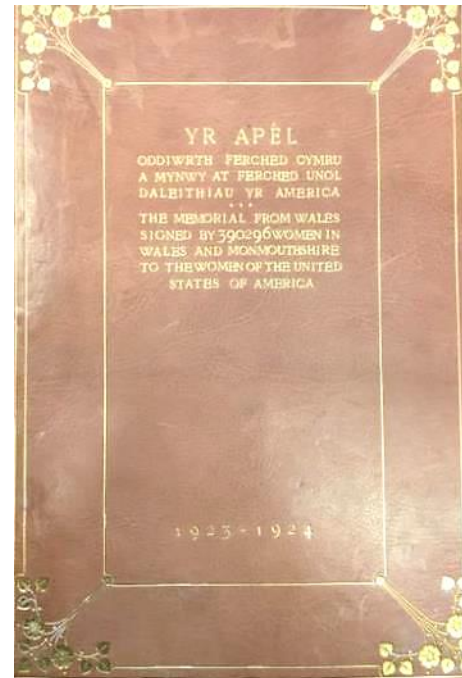


In 1924 the Welsh Peace delegation, comprising Mary Ellis, Elined Prys, Gladys Thomas and led by Annie Hughes-Griffiths, the chair of the WLNU, crossed the Atlantic with the petition held in a solid oak trunk. Working with American representatives as the women's rights campaigner Carrie Chapman Catt to disseminate their message. They received a warm welcome and travelled across the United States on a 'Peace Tour' lasting two months. In order to build support, they addressed numerous events with enthusiastic audiences drawn from various American women's organisations, representing a large number of women. The petition was then presented to the women of America and deposited in the Smithsonian Institute.

Annie Hughes-Griffiths kept a diary of their travels, that has since been digitised. A commemorative leather-bound book with vellum pages was presented to the US President, Calvin Coolidge, one of several US Presidents who claimed Welsh descent.

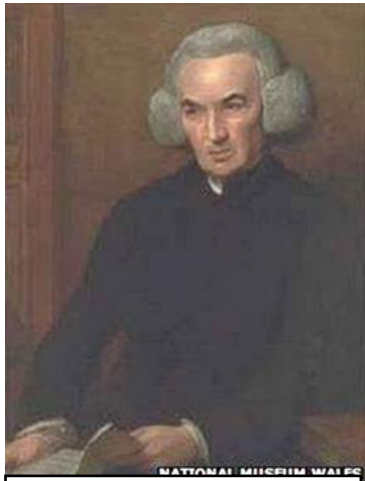
The sheer ambition and success of the project can be better understood by recognising the strength of the relationship between Wales and the United States of America. In Wales there was a popular medieval tale about a Welsh prince named Madoc ab Owain Gwynedd who set sail in 1170 into the Atlantic and found a new land across the seas. Over time several attempts were made to locate this mythical settlement; none were successful.

There was a steady stream of immigrants from Wales after the first official Welsh settler, Howell Powell, who left Brecon for Virginia in 1642. Religious persecution during the reign of King Charles II led to several waves of migration, including the Bala Quakers who settled in Pennsylvania in 1682, and Morgan John Rhys' Baptists who settled in Cambria, Pennsylvania in 1683. Later, the Reverend Samuel Roberts and his congregation from Llanbrynmair went to Tennessee in 1795. There were also a number of Welsh Mormons, including those who founded Malad City, Idaho. Migration in the nineteenth century was driven by poverty, and these people joined the settlement of the American West. Later in the nineteenth century saw the start of industrial migration into the iron and coal industries of Pennsylvania.



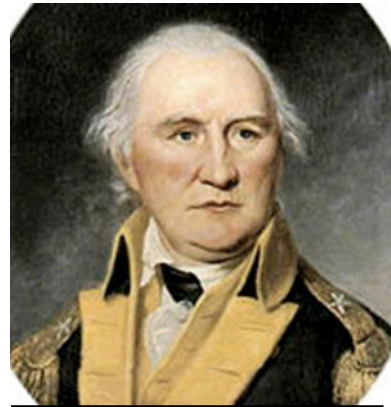


Likely influenced by a strong tradition of nonconformist Christian beliefs, and no doubt still resenting the imposition by England of the Acts of Union of 1536 and 1542, a number of people with a connection to Wales played a part in the history of America. A few occupied important positions during the American War of Independence, including three grandsons of Welsh immigrants: Francis Nash, John Cadwalladr and the renowned Daniel Morgan, who all served as high-ranking officers in the Revolutionary army. Interestingly, sixteen of the fifty six signatories to the Declaration of Independence, were of Welsh descent, including William Floyd, Stephen Hopkins, Arthur Middleton, Robert Morris, Francis Lewis and, perhaps the most well-known, Button Gwinnett - a revolutionary governor of Georgia and a general in the Patriot Corps. Another person of influence was the Rev. Richard Price (1723 –1791),



Rev Richard Price, FRS, portrait by Benjamin West.

who was a renowned scholar, moral philosopher and an important mathematician, working at the centre of London society. His strong liberal beliefs in egalitarianism, and the right of people to govern themselves, influenced America's founding fathers such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and George Washington. His principles helped to shape the US constitution.



Daniel Morgan (1736 – 1802), Brigadier General in the Continental Army.

During the nineteenth century a number of people of Welsh descent held positions of influence in American society, such as JP Morgan, one of the infamous American robber barons. Others helped found important universities, including Elihu Yale who helped found Yale University, Morgan Edwards who founded Brown University and Rowland Ellis who founded Bryn Mawr, a liberal arts college for women.

The impact of the petition is difficult to assess but, nevertheless, as a direct consequence of the petition the nine American Women’s networks who supported the Welsh Peace Delegation joined forces to form the ‘Conference on the Cause and Cure of War’. This organisation remained influential in American society through to the outbreak of WW2, and possibly helped delay US involvement in WWII.

**Note:** For information, I noticed that Ffion Reynolds, an old friend of EDAS, is involved with this project and was responsible for transcribing Annie’s diary. Those of you who participated in the 2011 EDAS Field Trip to Pembrokeshire organised by Barbara and me, may remember Ffion, then a CADW archaeologist, when she led a fabulous guided walk along the Golden Road that crosses the Preseli Hills, which ended at an excavation of a Neolithic gallery grave being conducted by Prof Tim Darvill and his mattock-wielding friend and colleague Geoff Wainwright. Afterwards I remember that six or seven of us, including Ffion, had to be crammed unceremoniously into my VW Golf to move onto the next site, an impressive Neolithic stone circle. Great memories.



Near Carn Menyn, Pembrokeshire: Ffion looks bemused by Andrew's explanation about the source of the Stonehenge Blue Stones.

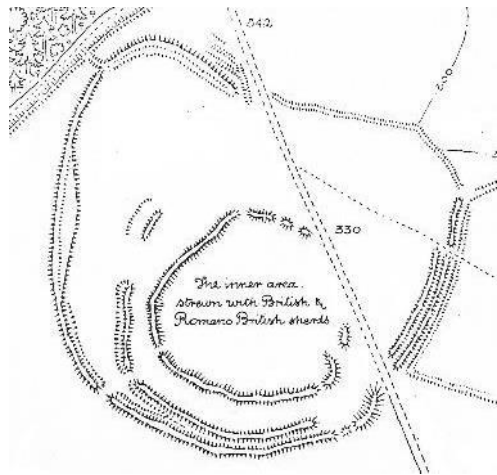
**Andrew Morgan**

## View from Above 61: Buzbury Rings

Photo by Sue Newman  
and Jo Crane



Dave Stewart covered this 'hillfort' in his May 2019 presentation to EDAS and there is a paragraph on it in that summer's newsletter, including a plan quite similar to that shown here. The plan here is from



Heywood Sumner's *The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase*, published in 1913, though I've removed some of the text. The remaining text in the centre says "The inner area, strewn with British and Romano-British sherds", and he said that this was "the place of habitation ... the site is pastoral rather than defensive".

The plan in the earlier newsletter includes further earthworks, particularly to the south, as well as what seem to be hut circles in the central area. It isn't clear from the photograph exactly what remains beyond the more obvious parts of the outer and inner enclosures, though it does look as if cultivation has reduced or removed some of the earthworks, despite the site being scheduled since 1934.

Buzbury Rings is about 6km from Badbury Rings on the road to Blandford which, of course, crosses it. The eastern part is in Ashley Wood Golf Course. The schedule says that it began as a D-shaped Neolithic causewayed enclosure and confirms the circles as the depressions marking the site of round houses. It also effectively confirms Sumner's comment about finds in the central enclosure, clearly the focus of settlement and quite possibly an Iron Age farmstead. The schedule includes measurements of the size of the banks and ditches – significant but not obviously significantly defensive.

If you want to know more, the schedule is [here](#), but better to read Dave Stewart and Miles Russell's 2017 book, *Hillforts and the Durotriges*.

**Geoff Taylor**

Many thanks to Sue Newman and Jo Crane for this link to some great aerial images of ancient sites: go to <http://www.davidabram.co.uk/about>, and follow through to the Gallery. There is an exhibition of David's work at The Lighthouse, Poole, 5<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> March (sorry if this doesn't get to you until after it's started): *Traces: Pre-Historic Britain from the Air*, see [here](#).

And the same day, Alan told me of an article about David's work in the Guardian online [here](#).

## **Weblink Highlights February 2024**

Another month with many items for you to browse. This creates something of a dilemma for me when compiling these lists - when to stop. Today is the deadline, so I started compiling the list and writing the highlights yesterday, but have since accumulated another 4 items! Only one is included as it relates to the talk given by Gordon Bartlet last September on Bournemouth and Poole trams. Indeed, the tram now going to auction was featured in Gordon's talk. The article in the Bournemouth Echo includes a photo that shows the tram and EDAS member Mike Tizzard (you have to click on the camera in the centre of the picture and scroll to the next photo to see Mike).

The flow of items on random topics, not related to recent finds or analysis, continues, but Joel Day's pieces in the Daily Express seem to have gone slightly astray. There were 3 this month that I have not listed because they were either old news or have since been thrown into doubt. The first was a revelation first announced in 2020, but headlined this month by Joel Day as a 'breakthrough'. The second one, about Stonehenge, repeated the theory that the Stonehenge bluestones were previously part of a stone circle at Waun Mawn, an idea that has since been discredited. His third article was a retelling of the discoveries at Arthur's Stone in 2021. On a more positive note, the item about Carn Euny (another site visited during the 2013 EDAS field trip - see last month's Weblinks) is bringing archaeology to a wider readership without falling into the trap of recycling old news as new, or overlooking more recent contrary findings. However, I do take issue with the headline - perfectly preserved? Really?

The idea that the Easter Island script predates European arrivals on Rapa Nui seems to rely on the view that the carbon dated wood was not stored for 200 years, but inscribed soon after it was felled. But why did it need to be stored? It could have just been a piece left over and discarded until it was found and inscribed 2 centuries later, or it could have been used initially for some other purpose, probably as part of a larger item, but then 'recycled' as a tablet. This item also raised the question in my mind – is there any similarity to other scripts? It is quite possible that there is more in the paper from which this article is taken, but I could not access it to check.

***Alan Dedden***

### **February Weblinks - No. 65**

**Undeciphered Script From Easter Island May Predate European Colonisation [here](#)**

**English Heritage Acquire Third Thornborough Henge [here](#) and [here](#)**

**Roman Funerary Bed Found In London Excavation [here](#)**

**Mass Grave Reveals Secrets Of The Black Death [here](#)**

**Pterosaur Fossil Found On Isle Of Skye [here](#)**

**Prehistoric Woodland Habitat And Insects Found On Exmoor [here](#)**

**Scientists Decipher 2,000 Year-Old Scrolls [here](#)**

**Site Of 'Worldwide Importance' Found By Amateur Fossil Hunters [here](#)**

**Mammoth Tusk Tool Possibly Used To Make Rope 37,000 Years Ago [here](#)**

**Battle Of Hastings Hoard Of 122 Anglo-Saxon Coins Could Fetch £180,000 At Auction [here](#)  
But actually: Coins Found By 2 Metal Detectorists Sold At Auction For Over £325,000 [here](#)**

**Perfectly Preserved Iron Age Village Complete With Homes And Stables [here](#)**

**Robot Reveals Story Of 600 Year-Old Shipwreck In Norway [here](#)**

**Roman Chicken Egg With Liquid Contents Found In Aylesbury [here](#)**

**Charles Darwin's Entire Personal Library Catalogued And Published [here](#)**

**Roman Legionary Camp Discovered In Israel [here](#)**

City Lost In Mexican Jungle For 1,000 Years [here](#)

Roman Era Weapons Found In Polish Forest [here](#)

Ancient DNA Reveals Children With Down's Syndrome Were Given Noble Burials [here](#).

The 'Severed Hand' May Reveal How Stone Age Language Developed [here](#)

Pliosaur: Museum Appeals For Help Excavating Sea Monster [here](#)

Stone Age Wall At The Bottom Of The Baltic Sea May Be Europe's Oldest Megastructure [here](#)

Archaeologists Discover Mummies In Chinese Desert [here](#)

Gems Stolen From The British Museum Go On Display [here](#)

Controversial Study Claims Ancient Tomb Does Contain Alexander The Great's Father [here](#)

New Research Claims 'Skin' Of Ancient Reptile Was Painted On [here](#)

Spanish Archaeologists Restore 3,000 Year-Old Egyptian Coffin [here](#)

13,000 Year-Old Bone Bead Is The Oldest Of Its Kind In The Americas [here](#)

2,000 Year-Old Roman Villa Found In Bay Of Naples May Have Belonged To Pliny The Elder [here](#)

Ancient Faces Brought Back To Life At Scottish Museum [here](#)

4,750 Year-Old Megalithic Plaza Discovered In The High Andes Of Peru [here](#)

Valley Of Lost Cities Found In The Amazon [here](#)

Metal Armour Found At Historic Maryland Fort Dates Back To 1600s [here](#)

Isle Of Skye's Lost Village 'Brunell' Discovered During Forestry Work [here](#)

Neanderthals Were Smarter Than Previously Thought [here](#)

Star Carr Finds To Go On Display At Scarborough's Rotunda Museum [here](#)

'Very Rare' Clay Figurine Of Mercury Found At Previously Unknown Roman Settlement In Kent [here](#)

Over 1,000 Skeletons Found During Excavations At Abbey Of Beaumont, Tours [here](#)

240 million Year Old Fossil Of Dragon Like Reptile From Triassic Period Discovered [here](#)

'Road To Ruins' - How I Discovered The Magic Of Archaeology [here](#)

Columbia Looks To Recover Treasure From The *San Jose* [here](#)

Rare Crocodile Bones Discovered Near Whitby Are Over 180 Million Years Old [here](#)

Theory Of Human Evolution Could Be Rewritten After 50,000 Year Old Discovery [here](#)

Metal Detectorist Unearths 1,500 Year Old Gold Ring In Denmark [here](#)

Evidence Of Saxon Town Found Beneath The National Gallery [here](#)

Close To 150 Burials Found At Complex Dig At Site Of Medieval Abbey At Carrickfergus [here](#)

Ness Of Brodgar Project Gains 2 Wins At Current Archaeology Awards [here](#)

Largest Fossil Crab Claw Ever Discovered Is 8 Million Years Old [here](#)

16 Finds From Iron Age And Roman Times Found In Boggy Anglesey Field [here](#)

'Extremely Rare' Gold Ring Found At Roydon [here](#)

100 Year Old Tram To Be Sold At Dorset Auction [here](#)

## From the Archives 16

Volume XIX 'for' 1898 continues with a long article about Wareham's religious foundations and castle. As far as I can tell, and I'm not as knowledgeable about Wareham as some of the members, the part about religious foundations is fairly accurate, though the bulk of the paper is concerned with building a case for there having been a Norman castle at Wareham. The author concludes that there was such a castle on the site pictured and, of course, subsequent investigations have shown that to be true. If anyone would like a copy of this article (or, indeed, any others mentioned in this series), please let me know.



The article mentions Horton Abbey, which owned St Andrew's Chapel in Wareham – a Saxon foundation on the site that became Holy Trinity Church (at the time of writing 'Not Just Sundays Community Café'). I mention this only because I didn't know that Horton, 5 miles north of Wimborne, had an Abbey (or maybe had forgotten) – a Benedictine foundation of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Horton church may be partly on the site of the Abbey church, with the rest of the buildings to the south-east, but English Heritage could find no traces of the Abbey buildings.

J. Merrick-Head was then the owner of Pennsylvania Castle, a Gothic revival mansion on Portland. He had had excavations done on the 'ruined churches' of St Andrew within his grounds, partly seeking to establish a link with nearby ruined Rufus Castle, also in his grounds. The link seems tenuous as the castle is 15<sup>th</sup> century, possibly on an 11<sup>th</sup> century site, whilst the church was originally Saxon but rebuilt in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (and demolished in the late 1750s). However, of more interest was this photograph of what



looks quite similar to the cross slab that Vanessa found at All Hallows. It was found at the entrance on the south side of the church, by the end of the chancel, turned upside down to be used as a door step and partly broken. The description says it "is of Portland stone, well preserved and of good workmanship." Whilst there are 3 monuments in the churchyard that are listed, this isn't one of them, nor is it shown in the large gallery of photographs for the church in 'The Encyclopaedia of Portland History' online. However, it may well

survive as RCHME, vol II, p249 says "S. of church, remains of three coffin-lids with moulded edges, two with raised cross, mediaeval."

The other short 'antiquarian' article in this volume relates to the apparently Iron Age lake dwellings near Glastonbury, though is mostly about similar ones found on the Continent, especially in Switzerland, and contains little of interest here.

An article in volume XX, dated 1899, discusses Phoenician colonisation and trading from around 3,000 years ago, including the trade in Cornish tin. Much of the article is factual or reasonable conjectures based on knowledge of the day, but there are some rather fanciful assertions. I particularly liked the idea that Silbury Hill is a platform for sacrifices, perhaps human, to the Phoenician god Baal. It is now thought that the hill, the largest artificial prehistoric mound in Europe, was built around 2400 BC. Its purpose and use still remain unknown.

There is a short piece on aspects of Dorchester history which points out there is no evidence for the plague of 1595 reaching the town, despite it commonly appearing in books. On the contrary, church registers show no increase in deaths in that period. In fact, although the Black Death of 1348/9 almost certainly came to Dorchester, there was apparently no evidence of that either. The plague visited Dorchester in 1645, but with fairly low mortality.

**Geoff Taylor**

## The Italian Chapel, Orkney

Some will, no doubt, know about the chapel, perhaps from visiting Orkney or from the times it has featured on TV. It is on the small island of Lamb Holm (or 'Lambholm'), south of the largest island, Mainland, and to the north of the island of Burray.

Apart from the nearby statue of St George, the chapel is the only relic of POW Camp 60 from the Second World War. In 1942, 550 Italians captured in the North Africa Campaign were brought to Orkney to work on the Churchill Barriers, with 200 placed in Camp 60. Initially it must have been a cheerless place, with Nissen huts surrounded by barbed wire fencing in an open landscape. Those who have been to Orkney will know that the



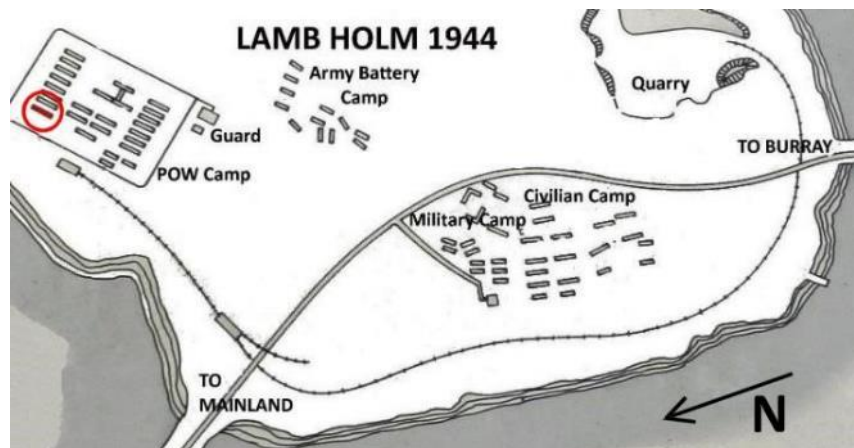
wind is almost a constant and rainfall over twice the amount in Dorset; trees only grow in a few sheltered areas. For Italians it must have been cold and bleak, although the Gulf Stream does, at least, mean that temperatures below freezing aren't very common.

Alongside their work, the prisoners set about improving their conditions, laying concrete paths and planting flowers. The statue of St George was made to preside over the camp square by Domenico Chiocchetti, basically of cement over a barbed wire framework. A theatre was built and a recreation hut, boasting a concrete billiard table.

The Churchill Barriers are 4 concrete block causeways linking some of Orkney's islands to stop access to the vital Navy anchorage of Scapa Flow. During the First World War blockships had done the job – ships sunk in the passages – but a U-boat found a way through in 1939 and sank the battleship HMS Royal Oak with the loss of 834 lives. The Barriers were started in 1940 but not fully completed until 1944, incidentally providing road links to the islands south of Mainland, only accessible by sea previously. Of course, the construction work provided leftover materials which the POWs could use.

A chapel was something the camp still lacked, provision of one even being recommended by the Inspector of POW Camps. Italy had surrendered in September 1943, so the Italians were, strictly, no longer POWs, but couldn't go home as Italy was under German control. They were given a wage and some freedom in the community. This, a combination of goodwill from a new commandant, Major TP Buckland, an energetic new padre, Father Giacobazzi, and the skills and enthusiasm of Signore Chiocchetti and many of his fellow prisoners, saw work commence in late 1943. Two Nissen huts were placed end to end (red at bottom left of the POW Camp plan), and the unsightly corrugated iron of what was to be the chancel and a small sanctuary covered by plasterboard, smoothed over at the top and panelled below.

Then came the task of obtaining materials. It seems that paint wasn't an issue as it's not mentioned in any of the sources, but everything else had to be scavenged, except the gold curtains bought from a firm in Exeter using the prisoners' welfare fund. Wood and metal came from blockships, and later wrecks, whilst concrete and cement



were used to make things where more normal materials weren't available, such as the altar and altar rail. Light holders were made out of corned beef tins and the baptismal font from the inside of a car exhaust covered in a layer of concrete. Four brass candelabra and two iron ones were fashioned from scrap metal.

Chiocchetti painted a Madonna and Child behind the altar based on a small picture given to him by his mother and carried throughout the war. He was the main artist and driving force behind the design, but many of the men worked on the chapel and two stand out for their contributions – Giuseppe Palumbi, a blacksmith, and Domenico Buttapasta, a cement worker. It was Palumbi who created the wrought iron rood screen to divide the completed chancel from the rest of the hut, which hadn't then been altered.



The contrast between the two parts was so great that it was decided to try to beautify the rest, and the commandant managed to obtain sufficient plasterboard to line the building completely. The windows were painted to resemble stained glass and the outside covered in a thick layer of cement. The facade was built of concrete by Buttapasta, concealing the shape of the hut and making the building look like a church. Even though another artist was sent from a different camp, the interior decoration wasn't completed when the Italians left the camp in September 1944. Chiocchetti actually stayed behind to complete the font.



Mr PN Sutherland Graeme, Lord Lieutenant of Orkney, promised that Orkney would cherish the chapel. After the war, the camp buildings disappeared, but the chapel increasingly became a place to visit for Orcadians, and then



for tourists. Preservation was an issue, with Sutherland Graeme often told that its materials made that impracticable.

However, in 1958 a preservation committee was formed and some repairs made. A BBC programme on the chapel was broadcast in Italy and included Domenico Chiocchetti, traced to his home in Moena in the Dolomites. Interest grew and the BBC paid for Domenico to return to Orkney in 1960, where he spent 3 weeks helping to restore the building. He attended a service in the chapel with 200 Orcadians, broadcast by stations across Italy, and visited again as a guest of Orkney with his wife, Maria, in 1964. Other visits followed by former POWs, including a group of 8 with family members in 1992. Domenico Chiocchetti died in 1999 just before his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday, and a Requiem Mass was held for him in the chapel with his family as guests of honour. Links with the descendants of the former prisoners remain strong.



**Geoff Taylor**

## EDAS PROGRAMME 2024

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

|                                      |               |                                       |                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Wed 13<sup>th</sup><br/>March</b> | AGM & Lecture | <b>Phil D'Eath &amp; Geoff Taylor</b> | The 2023 Field Trip to Kent                                              |
| <b>Wed 10<sup>th</sup><br/>April</b> | Lecture       | <b>Harry Manley</b>                   | The Dorchester Aqueduct                                                  |
| <b>Wed 8<sup>th</sup><br/>May</b>    | Lecture       | <b>Andrew Morgan</b>                  | The Origins of Dorset – in search of the Dorset/Hampshire Shire Boundary |

## DISTRICT DIARY

Notes: DNHAS lectures only appear here if I'm specifically notified. BNSS had an archaeology lecture in January but I've not yet seen any more. The other societies have more slots booked but not yet filled.

|                                        |                                               |                        |                              |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Thurs 21<sup>st</sup><br/>March</b> | The Coombe Bissett Landscape Research Project | <b>AVAS</b>            | Alyson Tanner and Alix Smith |
| <b>Thurs 21<sup>st</sup><br/>March</b> | Excavations at Launceston Farm                | <b>Blandford Group</b> | Tim Darvill                  |

### Archaeology Societies

- **Avon Valley Archaeological Society:** <http://www.avas.org.uk/>  
Meetings at Ibsley Village Hall, BH24 3NL (<https://ibsleyhall.co.uk/>), 7:30pm 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. In-house archaeology talks are, as far as I can tell, free for non-members (donations appreciated). There are also some Zoom presentations, particularly aimed at members, though they non-members can email [bnssmembership@gmail.com](mailto:bnssmembership@gmail.com) to see whether they can send you a 'link' for the talk.
- **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](mailto:karen.brown68@btinternet.com).  
Meetings at Furzebrook Village Hall, BH20 5AR, normally 7:30pm 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month except July & August. Visitors welcome for £3; membership £10 pa.