



# East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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**NEWSLETTER - OCTOBER 2006**

## **RECENT EVENTS**

### **Last EDAS Lecture**

At our last meeting, David Carter of the Weymouth LUNAR Society spoke to us about the "Wreck of the Abergavenny". The Earl of Abergavenny was an outward-bound East India Company ship, which struck the Shambles Bank off Portland Bill during a gale on the bitter winter's night of 5th February 1805. A rising tide finally freed her and although flooding fast, the Captain and crew tried desperately to beach her on Weymouth Sands but they lost the battle and she tragically sank 2 miles from the safety of the beach in 10 fathoms of water.

Over 250 passengers, troops and crew including her Captain, John Wordsworth, brother of the poet William, drowned in the wreck. Many were buried at All Saints Church, Wyke Regis in an unmarked grave, others at St Ann's, Radipole and St Andrew's, Preston. Nowadays, she lies in 50 ft of water. There are several rows of wooden posts sticking out of the sand. Visibility is rarely more than 10 ft. The sea temperature ranges from 5 to 16 °C depending on the season.

David explained that before excavating they carried out numerous sonar surveys of the wreck. Work on researching and excavating this wreck started in 1979 and has resulted in the recovery of over 50,000 items. Imagine EDAS carrying out a similar land-based excavation for over 20 years! David showed slides of a number of the artefacts and explained the methods used to excavate and conserve the items, which ranged from personal items, such as buckles, to cannons.

In 2005 the Weymouth LUNAR Society received the Nautical Archaeology Society's Adopt-a-Wreck award for their work in surveying, monitoring and interpreting this shipwreck. The award was presented to David and some of his team by Phil Harding from Channel 4's Time Team.

We thank David for his enthusiasm and for giving us a very detailed talk, wonderfully illustrated with slides. If you want to know more about the wreck and the society's work have a look at <http://www.weymouthdiving.co.uk/abergavenny.htm>

Peter Walker

### **Sat 19 August – Walk from Max Gate with Peter Walker**

A small but select group gathered at Max Gate to enjoy a (mainly) country walk which took in four churches, several stately homes of varying sizes and a number of Dorset's literary "sights".

Max Gate itself, where Hardy wrote much of his poetry and several of his novels, is closed on Saturdays so Peter Walker led us off away from Dorchester, past Old Came Rectory (home of William Barnes) towards Winterborne Came. En route Peter pointed out the deserted medieval village of Winterborne Faringdon and guided us to the, now redundant, Winterborne Came church and to see the neighbouring and rather grand Came House; this dates from the 1750s and 1760s and has some splendid rococo interiors. The church is mainly 15<sup>th</sup> Century with a Jacobean pulpit and some

impressive monuments. One internal monument is to a regency dandy, Col Dawson-Damer, who was at both Napoleon's retreat from Russia and at Waterloo; there are conflicting accounts as to which side he was on. In the churchyard we saw the mock saxon cross marking William Barnes' grave.

We carried on to the deserted village of Whitcombe on the A352. Again the church is redundant but has traces of 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> wall paintings and a fine octagonal 13<sup>th</sup> century font. William Barnes officiated here too!

Peter led us on towards West Stafford, passed the 18<sup>th</sup> century rectory, to the (active) church. The church is a mixture of styles from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century with many of the nave windows displaying the different styles.

We passed yet another of West Dorset's mini stately homes, Stafford House, on our way to Lower Bockhampton where we saw the old school House which Thomas Hardy attended first. We then followed a beautiful stream-side path along the southern edge of the Kingston Maurward park. The (not-so-mini) house had originally been built of brick, but a comment by George III prompted the owner, George Pitt, to encase it in stone – such influence. It now houses Kingston Maurward College.

Finally we arrived at the fourth of our churches - Stinsford - which is mainly 13<sup>th</sup> century. Most visitors, I suspect, are drawn to the burial place of Thomas Hardy's heart (the rest of him is in Poet's corner in Westminster Abbey) and that of C Day Lewis.

From Stinsford it was a pleasant walk across the water meadows and over the railway to the outskirts of Dorchester to round off a most enjoyable day. There had been plenty of church visits (for a Saturday!) and plenty of evidence of Dorset literary figures.

Thank you to Peter for leading a most enjoyable and interesting walk.

Susan Adams

### **Sun 24 Sep – Walk around Dorchester with Karen Brown and Pauline Clenshaw**

A very large contingent of 27 members gathered at Dorchester's Top of Town car park, and due to Karen and Pauline's record for organising interesting walks, there was high anticipation in the air. We were not to be disappointed. After a civilised cup of coffee, (or milky hot chocolate with added cream for those who eschew doom warnings of coronary problems), we visited the Old Court House. Here we were treated to an hour's educational entertainment of the very highest standard, by an uninhibited storyteller, who possessed charisma together with a deep knowledge and understanding of the events before, during and subsequent to the trial of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Sitting in the Public Gallery, with the Dock, Judge's Bench and the galleries for the Jury, Grand Jury and Landowners before us, the importance of that notorious affair became apparent. Descending to the cold, tiny, black stuffy cells below was even more of a revelation, resulting in a feeling of sympathy for any accused person in those days.

A tour of St.Peter's Church, with its beautiful bosses on a fine barrel roof, and a knowledgeable guide, was followed by a walk round parts of the town that are usually unseen by the visitor. During this we were enlightened about the ghastly goings-on of both villains and up-holders of the law in times past. Our perambulation took us past the Hangman's Cottage and John's Pond; in the latter an escaped prisoner drowned, though we wondered how he had managed it in such shallow water.

After a hurried lunch, when sandwich takers had the advantage in not having to wait for service, we reassembled at Maumbury Rings with the ever enthusiastic Bill

Putnam, who was on top form. He not only explained clearly the structure and history of this site, but also conducted us to see the remnants of the Roman Walls, the Town House and the monument at the end of the great Aqueduct. Bill is a fascinating source of reliable information, particularly of the Roman Period, who is not afraid to say "we do not yet know". Lastly, St. George's Church at Fordington, with its spectacular William Morris chairs, and surprising memorial to German First World War prisoners who had died in the area, was especially opened for us.

This was a superb day, and for some of us more elderly folk, a tiring one, but most certainly well worth the aching legs. We are grateful to Karen and Pauline for the obvious effort they made in the preparation of such an enjoyable occasion, and look forward with eager expectation towards their next day out.

Barry Perratt

### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

#### **Sat 14<sup>th</sup> October: Verwood Potteries – a “Dorset Archaeological Day”**

A tour of county pottery sites (5hrs in **own car**) with Penny Copland-Griffiths of Verwood Pottery. For more information look at “Dorset Archaeological Days” on [www.dorsetforyou.com](http://www.dorsetforyou.com), or ring 01305 224921 for more details.

#### **Sat 14<sup>th</sup> October: Day School in Dorchester – “New Light on Old Shipwrecks”**

This is a day of lectures on ship wrecks around Dorset, and understanding more about marine archaeology and protection. The lecturers are well know local and marine archaeologists, including David Carter, who gave the recent lecture EDAS the “Wreck of the Abergavenny”. Contact Dorset County Council for more information.

#### **Sunday 22nd October - Walk around Rockbourne and Whitsbury with Steve Smith**

A gentle five mile walk taking in two churches and a hill fort, and passing near the Roman villa (unfortunatly closed). Meet at 10:30 at the village hall in Rockbourne (SU 114 183), parking along the road as the car park is closed for building work. Bring a packed lunch (or we might detour to the Cartwheel at Whitsbury if the weather is bad) and wear suitable footwear as the walk may be muddy in places. Any queries to Steve on 07798 832958.

#### **Shaftesbury Abbey Lecture**

Prof. Mick Aston will give a lecture about Shaftesbury Abbey at 7:30pm on 8<sup>th</sup> November at Shaftesbury Art Centre, Ball Street. Tickets are £6 (£5 to EDAS members) and will be brought to our meetings in September and October.

### **The Presentation of Martin Green's Degree**

“Mr. Vice Chancellor:

If cricketers were once divided between Gentlemen and Players, archaeologists are sometimes described as professionals or amateurs. That is correct as long as it describes how they earn their livings, but it is all too easy for those terms to take on other connotations. Good work is described as professional, poorer work as amateurish. And here the distinction breaks down. In this country we are fortunate in having a long tradition of researchers who pursue archaeology in their spare time. That has been the case since the seventeenth century and it is still true today. The most professional of all amateur archaeologists is Martin Green, a Dorset farmer who has probably devised more projects, discovered more monuments and conducted more excavations than most people working in universities.

Not just that, he is actively engaged in sharing his results. His centre of operations at Down Farm is on the itinerary of any field trip, from Glasgow to Reading, From Kalmar

to Leiden. Several generations of students have learned how to recognise artefacts by looking at his collections or how to excavate by working with him in the field. At the last count half a dozen university departments have been engaged on projects which he has inspired. At least six professors of archaeology started their careers working on his sites, and I am delighted to say that some of them are here today.



Martin Green has been a particular friend to this university. We have inspected his sites so often that he is virtually part of the syllabus. He is extremely generous in sharing the results of his research, not only with fellow archaeologists but with a much wider audience, for he is not just a scholar, he is an active conservationist. In this, as in so much else, he sets an example to us all. Students have taken samples from his excavations, some have written dissertations on the artefacts he has discovered, and I no longer remember how often he appears in the acknowledgements of Reading PhD theses.

He also does what academic archaeologists do. He has written a wonderful book on the evolution of the landscape he knows so well and has collaborated on many other publications. In fact he writes more than many people faced with the Research Assessment Exercise, and what he writes is rewarding and original. He is a regular speaker at conferences here and overseas. He can also do what most academics cannot manage. He makes his own flint axes and he reads the ancient landscape with a farmer's eye. He even grows his own woad.

How does he do it? I really don't know. It is true that he lives in one of the richest archaeological landscapes in Britain, but he has a penchant for finding the unexpected and seeing what others have missed that is unmatched in archaeology today. This uncanny combination of eagle eyes and green fingers (no pun intended) might suggest something slightly monstrous, but Martin is modest about his achievements. I'm not even sure that he is aware of them. But many people are, and I am glad to say that some of them are present at this ceremony.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, I present Martin Green for the Honorary Degree of Science of this University”.

Richard Bradley

### **COPPER ALLOY MOUNT**

Approx. dimensions: 60mm x 54mm x 7mm. Weight; 29.3 gram. Found near Blashenwell Farm in Purbeck. The object is roughly triangular in shape, tapering downwards. The back is concave, and there are two forward projecting curved horns at the front and top. There is a stylised brow ridge and an upper part of the nose around two stylised eye sockets. The lower part of the nose is cast as two channels depicting the cavities left on a skull after the decay of cartilage.



It is most likely an example of a 1st/2nd century Roman decorative mount in the shape of an ox-skull - a bucranium, which is a specific feature of Greek and Roman religion - a motif that is only used in connection with the decoration of objects, sarcophagi and temples.

The following is taken from the comment by Ralph Jackson, British Museum.

The true ox-skull, the bucranium, had a sacred aspect and bucrania were incorporated in decorative reliefs on temples, alters and in funerary contexts. However, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between an emblematic living ox-head and a defleshed ox-head skull, especially if the image is stylised. Both images were common motifs in the decorative repertoire of classical antiquity. It is not possible to know today what, if any, meaning the ancient viewer took from such images. The motif, whether an ox-head or skull, was no doubt:

- a specifically associated with the sacrificial role of the ox
- b sometimes accompanied by other images of sacrifice, (e.g. axe, knife garland)
- c associated with the cults of Mithras and Cybele, and
- d as an apotrophic function. (In a distinctive series of bronze ox-head amulets, the power invested in the shaped horns together with the virility of the beast was intended to avert the malign influence of the Evil Eye.)

The above various potential meanings may be of interest but the artefact may have been simply a decorative image.

## Notes

- 1 Ox-skull designs and complete ox-head designs both connected by garlands are found in the frieze over the columns of many Greek and Roman buildings
- 2 Two similar copper alloy ox-head artefacts have been found in the area of Hadrian's Wall.
- 3 Bucranium is a 'compressed' compound word derived from Bos and Cranium, and is only used in connection with decoration.

The writer thanks Dr J.D. Hill, Curator of the Iron Age Collections, Dr R. Jackson, Curator of Roman Britain (both of The British Museum), and Nick Griffiths for their comments upon which the above is based.

Ken Wheatley.

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

The dates for EDAS events are underlined. The monthly evening lectures start at 7.30pm. Walks and field visits usually meet at 10.30 am at the published Grid Reference. Ring the leader if the weather is doubtful or if more details are required.

### **2006**

- Wed 11 Oct EDAS lecture: "**The Milestones of Dorset**" with John Tybjerg of the Milestone Society.
- Sat 14 Oct Verwood Potteries hosts a "**Dorset Archaeological Day**". See earlier for more details.
- Sat 14 Oct Dorset County Council Day School – "**New Light on Old Shipwrecks**". See earlier for more details.
- Sun 22 Oct **Walk** around Rockbourne and Whitsbury with Steve Smith. See earlier for more details.
- Wed 8 Nov Lecture at Shaftesbury Arts Centre from **Prof. Mick Aston about Shaftesbury Abbey**. See earlier for details.
- Wed 8 Nov EDAS lecture: "**Hands-on Osteo-archaeology**" with Mark Maltby of Bournemouth University.
- Wed 13 Dec EDAS lecture: "**Exploring the seabed of the Solent and Wight: Marine archaeology and aggregate**" with Rebecca Causer of Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology.

### **2007**

- Wed 10 Jan EDAS lecture: "**Industrial Archaeology of Wessex**" with Dr Peter Stanier of the Industrial Archaeology Society.
- Wed 14 Feb EDAS lecture: "**A Mill on the Stour**", with Colin Cope, custodian of the White Mill at Sturminster Marshall.
- Wed 14 Mar EDAS lecture: "**Treasure and the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Hampshire**" with Robert Webley, Portable antiquities officer for Hampshire.