



East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2008

Recent Events

Last EDAS Lecture

At our last lecture Peter Sommer, archaeologist, writer and documentary producer gave us a talk "**In the Footsteps of Alexander The Great**" which was postponed from November. Peter told us how, during his school days, a new history teacher had fired him with interest in history, and on Alexander the Great in particular. This experience changed his subject choice at University, and after graduating he literally 'followed in the footsteps of Alexander' for 2000 miles, tracing the first part of Alexander's conquest on foot. This was despite the lack of local maps, which are illegal in many of the areas he traversed. Peter walked from village to village and was always treated with great hospitality.

Alexander was born in Macedonia in 356 BC, and died aged only about 33, but in this relatively short life he conquered most of the known ancient world. His empire eventually stretched from Asia Minor to Persia and even parts of Afghanistan. He was a formidable warrior who was always at the head of any attack, and he was highly respected by his men. He defeated the existing Persian empire, whose King Darius III fled in panic - even abandoning his wife and daughters (whom Alexander treated with honour and courtesy). Always a 'politician', Alexander took archivists with him to document everything, and so we know much of his life and (enhanced!) achievements.

Peter's skill as a historian and presenter was very evident, and also his infectious enthusiasm. We saw pictures of many places that had been fundamental in the development of the ancient world, such as Troy and Antioch. Peter's knowledge was encyclopaedic, and the talk was absolutely riveting. We thank him very much indeed for a fascinating lecture.

Forthcoming Events

Dartmoor Field Trip 8 June to 13 June 2008

We remind members about this year's Field Trip, and that Brian would like to know as soon as possible if you are coming. See last month's Newsletter for contact and other details.

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.

2008

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| <u>Wed 13 Feb</u> | EDAS Lecture: <u>The life and times of the Mary Rose 1509-1545</u> with Bill Moore of the Mary Rose Information Group. Bill will be dressed in Tudor Period Costume. |
| <u>Wed 12 Mar</u> | EDAS Lecture: " <u>Dorset's first Railway</u> " with Peter Sills, chairman of the Purbeck Mineral and Mining Museum Group |
| <u>Wed 26 Mar</u> | <u>EDAS AGM</u> followed by a talk by Graham and Susan Adams on the 2007 Field Trip. |
| <u>Wed 9 Apr</u> | EDAS Lecture with Bob Bewley of English Heritage: " <u>Understanding the past; new approaches to our heritage</u> ". |

EDAS EXCAVATIONS AT WORTH MATRAVERS - August, 2007

Introduction

The following is a note on the findings of the investigations carried out by the Society in Football Field, Worth Matravvers, at the request of our member, Bob Kenyon. Members may remember that Bob owns the field and is Chairman of the Worth Community Property Trust. The latter is in the process of implementing a project to provide villagers with 5 affordable houses on Football Field. Over the 2006 year-end, a small group of members excavated a trench across the corner of the footprint of one of the houses, in order to satisfy the Planning authorities that no archaeology would be destroyed by the building activities there. A report was written by one of the excavators, Dave Stewart, indicating that no archaeology would be damaged in the area investigated. The report was submitted by the Trust to the County Archaeological Advisor, Steve Wallis.

Subsequently, Bob requested the Society to carry out further investigations in the Field in order to pursue two objectives. Firstly, several archaeological investigations had been carried out in the past, including a well-known excavation by Southampton University in 1991-3, revealing a Roman building (probably a barn) with a grain-drier. Other sampling work in the field had revealed artefacts and Bob was keen to demarcate the area with archaeology against the sterile area. The second objective was to investigate the gardens of two of the houses, to record any archaeology that might be destroyed by landscaping, etc., by the house occupants. A third aim of training novices was added, although no formal instruction was planned.

The plan was to excavate throughout the whole of August, using EDAS members. The first objective would be met by excavating an area of 28m by 20m, which it was thought would define the demarcation line. The second objective was to be reached by excavating two trenches, one in each garden, each measuring 3m by 2m. However, it was intended that these plans would be amended, if necessary and in the light of ongoing experience.

In the event, these plans were largely abandoned, in favour of eight trenches, located by reference to anomalies on plots output from gradiometric geophysical surveys. These were carried out by Dave Stewart, during the early days of August. Trenches 1 and 2 were dug as originally planned, 3m by 2m in two garden areas. Trench 3, 10m by 1m, was across an area with indeterminate anomalies, close to a known back-filled quarry and not expected to contain any archaeology. Trench 4, 10m by 2m, crossed an area of unidentified anomalies near to an area of known archaeology. Trench 5, 20m by 2m, was sited largely randomly, to sample an area of the field not addressed by other trenches. Trench 6, 20m by 2m, was positioned to transect two parallel linear anomalies shown on a plot. Trench 7, again 20m by 2m, was located in a corner of the field where a Roman coin had been found by metal-detectorist member Ken Wheatley, and where there were anomalies on a plot. Trench 8, 2m by 1m was sited at right angles to Trench 4, to investigate an anomaly on a plot. The trenches, apart from 1, 2 and 8 which were dug by hand, were machine stripped by a kind-hearted villager, Gavin.

The excavation was carried out by 24 EDAS members, including an archaeology student, Rebecca Ferguson, on a placement from Nottingham University. Most digging was done with trowels, although mattocks were used in some circumstances. Excavators worked a total of 173 days during August. Two novices were initiated. About 3 calendar days were lost to bad weather. No new archaeology was started after 31st August, but a small number of volunteers went back later to clean and record features.

Brief Summary of Findings

Trench 1 Revealed a layer of flat limestone fragments, which covered approximately 2/3 of the area of the trench, apparently lying on a natural stratum, and containing a scatter of artefacts, including a Bronze Age tanged and barbed arrowhead.

Trench 2 Contained no archaeology.

Trench 3 Unexpectedly, proved to be the richest, archaeologically. Was extended on several occasions to clarify the archaeology. Contained a cylindrical, dry limestone-lined feature, 1.7m in diameter and 1.5m in depth. The bottom was limestone flags and the feature contained large quantities of Iron Age or Romano British pottery and animal bones, including complete dog and cows' heads. An appreciable quantity of worked shale was also found. The bowl of a copper tin alloy Romano-British spoon was found on the upper fill. Interpretation of this feature is unclear. It may have been a (subterranean) cistern, used for storing either surface or spring water, and used subsequently as a midden. Or, it may have been a dry storage pit.



D Stewart

Well-like feature in Trench 3, showing a probable paved approach (top left).

An human inhumation was found about 3m SE of the cylindrical feature. The remains were badly damaged by ploughing. Examination by Steve McDonald indicated that the burial was fully-extended supine, with N-S orientation - head to the S - and the remains were those of a woman in her 40s, with an estimated height of about 5' 2". Bob Kenyon has decided that the burial should remain *in situ* and he intends to cover it with a 'cist capstone' of local limestone.

Further features were noted in the vicinity. This area clearly needs expanding and investigating.

Trench 4 Contained what appeared to be a neatly laid out footpath, but which is actually an outcrop of a vertical stratum of fractured limestone. Nearby the stratum was a midden, containing pot shards.

Trench 5 Nicknamed the "geology test" trench, it had no archaeology in it.

Trench 6 Revealed the two parallel linear features seen on the plot. They appeared to be ditch-like earthworks. One contained a small number of abraded Iron Age pot shards, the other was barren.

Trench 7 Three pit-like features were excavated, two of which contained very little of interest. The third, the largest, was similar to the much bigger storage feature in Trench 3, in that the sides and bottoms of both features were lined with limestone.

Trench 8 Completely covered with flat limestone fragments.



G Broadbent

**The badly damaged inhumation, surrounded by a grave of limestones
and with the head to the right (towards South)**

There is still much post-excavation work to do, and it is intended to return to the site again this summer, at least to continue investigations in the vicinity of Trench 3. Hopefully, a plan for this season's work will be drawn up in the next few weeks. A note will be published in the March or April Newsletter, inviting members to take part.

I would like to thank everyone who took part, before, during and after the excavations. My special thanks are due to my original three co-conspirators, Gill Broadbent, Sonia Ellingham and, particularly, Dave Stewart for his huge involvement. But, above all, my thanks are due to Bob and Bridget, for giving us the opportunity to dig at a wonderful site and for all their support.

Phil Roberts - 24.1.08