



# East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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**NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2008**

## **Recent Events**

### **Last EDAS Lecture**

Our last monthly lecture was "**Dorset's First Railway**" with Peter Sills, chairman of the Purbeck Mineral and Mining Museum Group. Most of us were probably aware that there is a lot of clay in Purbeck. Obvious examples of this are the large amount of black burnished ware that travelled from this area to Hadrian's wall, and Lillian Ladle's very large kiln site at Bestwall. However, I, for one, did not realise that there was intensive clay extraction throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> C. The huge scale of this operation was very obvious when Peter showed us a map of the underground mining tunnels. To support the transport of the clay a number of horse-drawn plateways were initially constructed leading to various landing piers on the coast. These plateways were designed to use standard parts from cartwrights, including the width of the axle and wheel sets. As the plateways were upgraded to proper railways the gauge stayed the same and it was then subsequently adopted nationally. This is a compelling explanation of why the standard rail gauge of 4' 8½" (which is still used in more than half the world's railways) is virtually the same axle width as that used by Roman carts – it all stems from the width of a horse standing between two shafts!

As clay production increased the railways were extended and improved, and Purbeck ended up with its own very large industrial transport system. However, when clay extraction finished, it is surprising how quickly much obvious evidence of the industry disappeared (unless you have the particular expertise to know what you're looking for). The Purbeck Mineral & Mining Museum is undertaking substantial reconstruction of the industrial archaeology, and it has a very active group of volunteers. Their web site is at <http://www.pmmmq.org/>. They are having their leaflet reprinted and will send EDAS some in due course.

We thank Peter for a very interesting and extremely well-presented lecture that showed us much more about this very important industrial archaeological site that is right on our doorstep.

## **AGM**

Our AGM on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March had a disappointingly small turnout, and we put this down to the early Easter, which affected school holidays. However, under John's direction the AGM went as smoothly and quickly as usual. Keith Allsopp stepped down as a Committee member, and had decided not to stand for re-election. The meeting thanked him for all his hard work over the years. Keith's retirement meant that there were two vacancies on the Committee for ordinary members, and there were also two nominations: Brian Maynard, who was seconded to the Committee last year, and Brian Popple. These two were both elected. The executive members also have to step down for e-election, and they were all unanimously re-elected. The Committee members for 2008/2009 now are:

<b>Chairman:</b>	John Day	<b>Membership Secretary:</b>	Della Day
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Peter Walker	<b>Programme Secretary</b>	S. Smith (D. Stewart)*
<b>Secretary:</b>	Gill Broadbent	<b>Special Advisor:</b>	Martin Green

**Ordinary Members:** Graham Adams, Keith Allsopp, Helen Brickell, Brian Maynard, Brian Popple, Phil Roberts, and Dave Stewart.

(\*Steve and Dave will work together in the Programme Secretary role for the current year).

The AGM was followed by a talk by Graham and Susan Adams about the 2007 Yorkshire Field Trip. We hope that this has fired-up some new members to come on future Field Trips.

### New Projector

The AGM lecture also saw the first outing of the new EDAS digital projector. There has been mounting pressure on us to get one of these, as over the past year or so more and more lecturers have asked to use one for their talks. In the past some EDAS members have been able to beg or borrow one when required, but this still left us not reliably knowing if we could supply one or not. We can now bring it even when the lecturer has his/her own, as this will help to avoid unexpected problems such as those experienced by a recent lecturer. The projector was chosen with help from a product survey in a computer magazine, and the committee is very pleased with it.

### Subscriptions

We remind members who do not already pay by direct debit that subscriptions for 2008/09 are now due.

### Forthcoming Events

#### Sunday 20 April Walk around Medieval Southampton

Don't forget the walk with Andy Russel of the Southampton Archaeology Unit, details of which appeared in the March newsletter. Meet at the Bargate at the top of the High Street at 10:30. The walk usually takes 1.5 to 2 hours. The charge for the walk is £2 which, for members, will be met out of our funds. After lunch, members can visit Maritime and Archaeology Museums, which are open on Sunday afternoons. For further information contact Peter Walker on 01425 471326 or email him at [peter@peterwalker.info](mailto:peter@peterwalker.info)

### POOLE HARBOUR HERITAGE PROJECT: UPDATE DORSET ALUM AND COPPERAS INDUSTRIES

We are very pleased to be able to pass on the good news that English Heritage has now agreed to fully fund the above Project. The initial area of investigation is Brownsea Island and work is scheduled to commence there on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> May and is expected to last for up to 15 days. Before the excavation can take place some site clearance has to be carried out to remove undergrowth. It is expected that the clearance will take place over 3 to 4 days towards the end of April and assistance will also be required for this.

A meeting has been arranged for the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2008 for those who have already indicated that they would like to help; and also for those who would like further information about the project. At this time there will be a short presentation explaining the background to the project and full details of the arrangements for the excavation on Brownsea Island. The meeting will be held between 10 am and 12 noon on the 5th floor of Poole Museum.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> April volunteers will be asked to complete a registration form indicating their availability for the excavation work in order that a rota can be prepared. Five volunteers a day for up to 15 days are required and the allocation of days will, of course, depend on the numbers who volunteer. It is possible that the work will continue over the weekends but this will depend upon whether or not there are sufficient volunteers to make weekend working worthwhile.

If you are unable to come to the meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> April but would still like to help on the excavation, please contact either Alan Hawkins on 01202 668178 or me on 01202 841547 when we shall be pleased to arrange an alternative time to meet you. There is now a dedicated e-mail address for the project which is [phhp@live.co.uk](mailto:phhp@live.co.uk).

If you would like to assist with this project but are unable to help in May there will be further opportunities for volunteer involvement later on at Studland and Kimmeridge.

Gill Broadbent

### **EDAS EXCAVATION - WORTH MATRAVERS 2008**

Members may recall a note in the February Newsletter, in which I indicated that there was more investigation required in Trench 3. The latter contained, amongst other interesting features, a limestone lined pit and an inhumation. Further work needs to be carried around the Trench to clarify the surrounding archaeology.

It is intended to excavate for 5 days per week on each of the weeks commencing 20th July, 27th July and 3rd August. Would any members interested in taking part please indicate their availability on the **tear-off slip** below. Please don't feel any constraints: nobody will be held to these dates in the future! I will use the returns as guidance in planning the work, and will contact members at the end of June with more information.

Phil Roberts (contact details below)

### **FUNDING CRISIS FOR THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME (PAS)**

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) intends to freeze funding for PAS for 2008/9 at £1.3M. The likely effect of this is the loss of 5 posts within the scheme. The PAS has been remarkably successful at recording antiquities that would otherwise almost certainly been lost and any reduction in the scope of the Scheme would be against the public interest.

Concerned members of the public are being urged to write individually to their MPs, asking them to do two things:

1. 'Sign the following Early Day Motion (EDM)':

#### **EDM 566: portable antiquities Scheme**

That this house recognises the great contribution of the Portable Antiquities Scheme to transforming the archaeological map of Britain by proactively recording archaeological finds made by the public; celebrates the fact that in 10 years the scheme has recorded on its public database more than 300,000 archaeological finds, which would not otherwise been reported, for the benefit of all; expresses concern that the likely impact of fundings proposed by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), following the recent Comprehensive Spending Review, on the PAS; and urges the Government to ensure that the Scheme is at least able to maintain its current levels of activity and to consider urgently whether MLA offers the best home for the PAS or whether another body, such as the British Museum, would not be better placed to provide PAS with a long-term sustainable future.

2. 'Write to James Purnell (Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport), expressing concern that if funding for the Portable Antiquities Scheme is not sustained then its activities will be reduced': £1.49M is needed for PAS for 2008/9.

It is believed that Christopher Chope, MP for Christchurch is not 'on board' for the EDM. It would especially be beneficial if any members living in the Christchurch constituency could write to Mr Chope.

For any further information, contact Phil Roberts at [roberts140@btinternet.com](mailto:roberts140@btinternet.com) or 01929 400 507.

Note about David Johnston, author of 'The Old Brewery, Wareham'

There were three people who played a central part in starting EDAS off: Tim Schadla Hall, Martin Green and David Johnston. It is David who has contributed the article on Wareham Brewery. He was a lecturer at Southampton University and gave archaeological lectures under the aegis of the Workers Educational Association in Wimborne. It was then that he directed a group of us in an excavation at Badbury, from which EDAS was inaugurated. On retiring he was unwell, but we are pleased to say he has made a good recovery.

David thanks Lillian Ladle and Charlie Hathaway for their help in his project of researching the lost Wareham Brewery.

**Review –“The Archaeology of Rabbit Warrens” by Tom Williams. Shire Publications**

Coming home of a night time the car headlights used to sweep across the field and in admiration we often saw a rabbit, even occasionally two. But things have changed. In the past year or so rabbits have done what rabbits do and we have been invaded. They prance about on the lawn during the day and we have little plant life left. They eat primroses as well as lettuce and carrots. Admiration and “don't they look lovely” is now a thing of the past. But, it was not always so. With this hostile approach I bought and read the Shire book, hoping to find a way to get rid of them.

Rabbits existed in Britain before the last ice age and then died out. The evidence is that they did not reappear until after the Norman Conquest, the earliest documentary record dates from 1135.

In medieval times they were a valuable food source and were wanted for their furs; they were cultivated in banks of earth, which can often be seen now a days, and called pillow mounds. These early rabbits were not fruitfully reproductive as they are now; this was a development that did not occur until the 16<sup>th</sup> century

Rabbits cultivated in medieval times were seen as invaluable and guards were employed to prevent people from poaching them. A single rabbit was worth more than a workman's daily wage in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Sometimes these pillow mounds were large and several existed side by side, making for commercial projects. Warrens, places where rabbits were farmed, earlier called coneygarths, existed into the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, and like dovecotes and fishponds were important symbols of social standing, often proudly displayed beside the main approaches to the mansions.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries rabbits became more prolific and their prices fell, eventually becoming food for poor people, although new warrens continued to appear in Wales and existed into the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Yorkshire. In Breckland, as late as the 1920s nearly half the area of the Elevedon Estate was given over to warrens, thirty warreners were employed and 120,000 rabbits taken annually. At Brandon, warrens existed into the 1950s and rabbits sold for meat and for fur for hats.

Old Warrens have become a feature of the landscape and often become place names, such as Badbury Warren. But, as interesting as the book is, the listed “Places to Visit” does not include Badbury, nor does it tell me how to get rid of them!

What surprises me is that although hares are mentioned in the medieval book *The Bestiary*, rabbits are not. Rabbits for rabbit pie are available, though, at 2 Wigbeth Cottage for the asking.

John Day

### **Dealing with Paupers.**

The latest work forming part of the research into the archaeology and history of the Allen Valley by EDAS, is a monograph by John Day, entitled "Paupers and the Overseers of the Poor in Dorset". Anyone who has investigated an historical topic will be aware of the very large number of hours that need to be spent in libraries and record offices, reading and transcribing books and documents, slowly with care and thoroughness. John's time commitment to a very worthy cause has clearly been massive.

The principle thrust of this paper is to provide a background account for the general reader of how the poor, both deserving and undeserving, have been dealt with by those in authority, by either support or punishment, from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Not only are the main acts of parliament considered, but, more importantly, the manner in which these were used by parish officials, particularly The Vestry.

This topic could be dreary, but the author has brought it to life by using quotations and examples of real distress, mainly relating to inhabitants of West Dorset. Furthermore, the account contains an extensive quantity of fascinating information. I now know the difference between a ruffler and a clappendoge, between a prigger and a doxie, all of whom were from the twenty-three categories of thieves and swindlers in Tudor England.

A parallel can be drawn between recent government action to control economic migrants in search of a better life in Britain, with the Settlement Acts in the seventeenth century designed to control the sturdy poor, who were travelling through the country in search of a village where their labour was required. Again, a comparison can be made between rules for financial support today for single mothers and their children with Affiliation Orders on unmarried mothers in the eighteenth century. As The Preacher says in Ecclesiastes: "There is nothing new under the sun. Already it has happened in the ages before we were born".

Writing in an easy-to-read manner, John has made a very useful start towards his intention of eventually covering specific areas of Dorset in depth. This intriguing monograph is the result of diligently bringing together material from a wide variety of sources, and I look forward to reading about the Wimborne area.

Barry Perratt

## 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**

- Wed 9 Apr EDAS Lecture with Bob Bewley of English Heritage: "**Understanding the past; new approaches to our heritage**".
- Sun 20 Apr **Walk around Medieval Southampton** with Andy Russell. See earlier for more details.
- Wed 14 May EDAS Lecture: **Reviewing the Roman invasion of Britain – why everything you thought you knew about AD 43 could be very wrong!**, with Dr Miles Russell of Bournemouth University
- Sun 29 Jun **Walk around Wimborne town** looking at the buildings with Bob Hill of the Historic Building Advisory Service.
- Sat 5 Jul **EDAS Summer Barbecue at Down Farm** More details to follow.
- Sun 31 Aug **A guided Walk around Sherborne** and group **visit to Castleton Waterwheel Museum** with Steve Smith. More details to follow.

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### **WORTH MATRAVERS EXCAVATION - 2008**

Please tick the dates below as appropriate, adding 'P' alongside ticks for preferred days

I / We would be interested in taking part in the dig and have indicated my/our availability against the dates below.

Name(s):

tel. no:

Address:

email address:

#### **July**

Sun 20th	Mon 21st	Tue 22nd	Wed 23rd	Sat 26th
				<b>August</b>
Sun 27th	Mon 28th	Tue 29th	Wed 30th	Sat 2nd
Sun 3rd	Mon 4th	Tue 5th	Wed 6th	Sat 9th

Any comments or queries:

Please give or send this to Phil Roberts, Wilton Cottage, West Lulworth, Dorset BH20 5SA, **by the end of May**. Further information from Phil Roberts at [roberts140@btinternet.com](mailto:roberts140@btinternet.com) or tel 01929 400507