



East Dorset Antiquarian Society

www.dorset-archaeology.org.uk

mail@dorset-archaeology.org.uk

NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2008

PERSONALIA

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Bill Putnam, who passed away quite suddenly after a long illness. Bill was a lecturer at Bournemouth University, and was recognised as an outstanding teacher. He was very active and well known on the local archaeology scene, and had a number of books published about Dorset archaeology, especially the Roman Period. After his retirement he continued to be involved with practical excavation, and also to give lectures. His death is a great loss to Dorset. We send our sympathy and best wishes to his family.

Recent Events

At our last EDAS Lecture Nick Griffiths talked about "**Life in a Medieval town**". In the first half he told what the documentary evidence from Court Registers, wills, etc. indicated about medieval life. From the reading of well chosen snippets from the archives, we learned about the hand-to-mouth existence of the commoner, the town laws about house-building and rubbish tipping (all totally ignored) and the behaviour of young men under the influence of drink. What was very obvious was that peoples' motivation, self interest and stupidity seemed to be identical to today, and in hearing all of these amusing stories we could understand exactly what was going through their minds at the time! One entrepreneurial example of self interest was to leave the town very early in the morning to buy up all of the produce the farmers were bringing into town. These intermediaries then returned to town with a monopoly control over the sale price of the goods (this is where the term 'forestall' comes from).

Nick had spent part of his career at the London Museum, and in the second half of the talk he showed us magnificent pictures of medieval objects. As a very rich town, London had a wealth of expensive artefacts, such as personal seals used to sign documents for contracts or goods. In another example of how things have not changed much, Nick told us the story of how a merchant had lost his seal, and then had to notify all merchants that he now had a new one. This is exactly the same as cancelling a stolen credit card! On another picture of medieval objects we learned where the word 'curfew' came from: a metal dish called a 'couvre-feu' was used to stifle the fire in the grate when the household retired to bed.

We thank Nick for an extremely interesting and well presented talk which showed us that maybe we have not progressed as far from the medieval mentality as we might think!

(I am glad to report that Nick has already volunteered to speak to us in the future on another topic.)

EDAS Field Trip 2009

Now is the time to start thinking about next year's Field Trip, which is being organised by Rob Fenwick, and will be based in Somerset and Gloucester. The first full day is Monday 8th June, but as usual, something might also be organised for the Sunday afternoon for early arrivers. The programme is still being finalised, and will cover a number of archaeological periods. Some possibilities under consideration are:

- something short for Sunday afternoon (Wells or Glastonbury)
- Bath (all sorts of things to see)
- Bristol for industrial archaeology including the docks, SS Great Britain and Bristol's slave trade involvement
- Somerset Levels including visit to the Willow Centre and Mulcheney Abbey,
- Chedworth Roman villa

A finalised programme will be published in a later Newsletter. To minimise attenders staying in widely scattered locations we always like to recommend a central location; for this Field Trip that location is round about Bath. We advise Field Trippers that they should try to get their accommodation organised quite early in the new year as this trip is in a popular tourist area.

There will be an application form in next month's Newsletter for members to let Rob know that they are interested.

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.

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| <u>Wed 12 Nov</u> | EDAS Lecture: <u>Forensic Archaeology</u> with Paul Cheetham of Bournemouth University. |
| <u>Wed 10 Dec</u> | EDAS Lecture: <u>The South Dorset Ridgeway</u> with Andy Payne of English Heritage. |
| <u>Wed 14 Jan</u> | EDAS Lecture: <u>The Prehistory of Hengistbury Head</u> with Peter Hawes. |
| <u>Wed 11 Feb</u> | EDAS Lecture: <u>An update on the Knowlton Project</u> with John Gale of Bournemouth University. |