



East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2009

WE WISH ALL OUR MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES A
VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR



PERSONALIA

Recently we were sorry to hear recently that Steve Bungay was not making very good progress after his bike accident, and also that Corinne was unwell. We wish them both all the best.

Recent Events

Last EDAS Lecture

At our last lecture Dr Louise Revell of Southampton University talked to us about town life in Roman Britain. Her interest was focussed on the variation of administration practised across the Empire. In Rome, society was highly driven by political power, and to support this required grand public facilities such as the Basilica and the Forum. For some time, a lack of grand public buildings in the far outposts of Empire (e.g. Britannia) has been interpreted as meaning that the same political processes did not happen here. Dr Revell started off with this presumption, and then through the lecture presented mounting evidence that the systems were very similar here, but were more low key. There were also other reasons why less evidence to date has been found here. This tends to corroborate that the Roman Empire was a unified whole. We thank Louise for an interesting and well researched lecture.

Wimborne Square 'Test Pit' excavation – October 19th-21st 2009

Like all good excavations, this one got off to a shaky start as the contractors were late and even our sharpened trowels and iron resolve were not enough to penetrate the tarmac. The brief was to examine six pits which were 1.2m square and 0.60m deep in order that the Borough engineers could determine the ground make-up for the potential 'enhancement scheme' in this area.

Two test pits were opened on the north-west and south-east corners of the Square on Day 1 and yielded a long-forgotten Victorian cast-iron gas pipe in Pit 1, a relic of the town's first gas supply. In 1837, a lamp standard was sited opposite the New Inn which then stood in what was to become The Square. It is possible that this pipe belonged to that gas lamp. Large quantities of slag and charcoal were found on the base of the second pit. Above this were numbers of small black granite 'sets' which had been part of the early road make up here. Slag from excavations at the Priest's House Museum in 1990 was dated to the 12th/13th centuries and the Square deposit could be of a similar age.



Wall footings of St. Peter's ?



Janet hard at work

Relentless, steady rain with occasional torrential downpours accompanied us on Day 2. Pits 3 and 4 were in the centre of the Square, one sheltered by a tree, the other took the full blast of the weather. The Priest's House Museum kindly provided a portable gazebo which was put over this pit and subsequently offered a little shelter from the elements. Pit 3 contained large quantities of building demolition debris consisting of hand-made brick, pieces of limestone and bits of floor and roof tile. Pit 4 was probably the most exciting, as either footings for a building or a wall were evident on the base of the pit. We may have found part of the east end of the chapel of St Peter's or its boundary wall. The chapel had gone out of use by the 1540s. Intriguingly, two Roman tesserae

were found in the wall debris. Excavation here had to be abandoned when water started coming out of the ground as well as pouring into it!

The sun shone on the final day and pits 5 and 6 were excavated on the north-east and south west sides of the Square. Almost as soon as the tarmac was removed, quantities of human bone were apparent. They tended to be small, broken pieces which had been moved around in the soil. Although a possible grave cut was noted in Pit 5, even here, there had been disturbance with (albeit small amounts of) modern road material present in the lowest levels. Some animal bone was also noted.

Despite the archaeological 'keyhole' surgery of the investigation, the preliminary results could confirm the site of St Peter's chapel and its churchyard. Some of the building debris may be from this church or the house or pub which followed it. The slag is a by-product from the processing of iron and indicates industrial processes taking place near by.

There was a huge amount of public interest over the three days of the excavation and our results will enable East Dorset District Council to further their plans for modernising the Square.

Thanks to Janet Bartlet, Dave Collinge, John Day, Cherry Elmer, Nikola Johnston, Steve and Vera McDonald, Bryan Popple and Sam Whitehead and to Emma Ayling of the Priest's House Museum who generously provided facilities (including biscuits!) to the diggers. **Lilian Ladle**



Obvious Public Interest !

Help with Research

I am just in the closing stages of researching the paupers and overseers of the poor of Wimborne, concentrating on the 18th. and first half of the 19th.c. I should like to extend part of this, a study of bastardy in Dorset, and wonder if any members would like to join me. The process is simple, a lap top useful but not essential, as long as the handwriting is readable! If you are interested I will send you fuller details so that you can make up your mind. Please contact me by e-mail John.della@btinternet.com, or 2, Wigbeth Cottage, Horton, Dorset, BH21 7JJ.

A request for further information would be appreciated before Christmas.

John Day

EDAS Field Trip 2009

Malcolm and Maureen are leading next year's Field Trip to North Wales. The trip will be centred on Caernarvon. This news means that attenders can start to investigate their accommodation !

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.

2009

Wed 9 Dec EDAS Lecture: "**Easter Island**" with Dr Kate Welham of Bournemouth University.

2010

Wed 13 Jan EDAS Lecture: "**Cerne Abbas**" with Rob Curtis, Blue Badge Guide

Wed 10 Feb EDAS Lecture: "**Tarrant Monkton**" with Jeremy Webster.

Wed 10 Mar EDAS Lecture: "**Wessex from the Air - 80 years on**" with Julian Richards.