



East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER– Summer 2011

STOP PRESS (21st July 2011)

EDAS EXCAVATION - Worth Matravers

Building work has started and foundations are being dug, but when the top soil was removed part of a post-Roman cemetery was revealed.

By the time you read this we should have cleared the graves within the footprint of the affected house but other graves in the garden area need urgent attention.

We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers with the strength to deal with heavy clay soil and the ability to clear the site of human remains.

Contact: Lilian Ladle Tel: 01929 553144 or email: bestwall@tiscali.co.uk or Andrew Morgan mobile: 07748961941

MAY - LECTURE

At our last meeting on 11th May we had an unconventional talk by the Rev. Stewart Timbrell, entitled: Discover Dorset – Part I. This proved to be a very personal journey by Stewart as he explored some historical delights in Dorset. As Stewart proudly explained, he is from “Up North” and is a straight talking cleric who carries his faith on his sleeve and ridicules pomposity, arrogance and greed, even if this means confronting the establishment of his Church. He wove his tales with a sharp eye for a humorous insight, and most of us agreed that history is much more fun when it is not sanitized; we all like the naughty bits. He offered explanations for the inverted Fleurs-de-lis within the Coat of Arms of Wareham, why the roof beams of St. John’s Church, Bere Regis still retain their C15th carved bosses of the twelve Apostles, why Arthur Conan Doyle is buried in the graveyard of All Saints Church, Minstead, with his feet pointing skywards and details of the brutal regicide of King Edward II by our own John Matravers, making ingenious use of a hollowed horn and red hot poker, and much, much more.

After his impressive monologue, which included an unexpected encore, I can only reiterate what Stewart’s beloved John Keble wrote: “Blest are the pure in heart” and thank him very much for a humorous evening. **Andrew Morgan**

EDAS VISIT: SALISBURY on Saturday 24th September

There will be a visit to Salisbury Cathedral in the morning followed in the afternoon by a Blue Badge guided tour round the town. The combined cost will be £8.

Please register your interest with **Graham Adams**: email g_s_adams@btinternet.com or tel: 01305 853935 .

VISIT – ROCKBOURNE ROMAN VILLA

On Sunday 22nd May, 26 members met at Rockbourne Roman Villa near Fordingbridge for a guided tour with David Allen, former curator of the villa and its museum. The site was discovered by a farmer in 1942 but was then taken on and investigated by A T Morley Hewitt, a local estate agent and antiquarian. In 1956 Morley Hewitt bought the land and started a systematic investigation which carried on until 1974. Unfortunately the excavations were poorly recorded, ignoring much of the stratigraphy and not recording the exact location of finds. The excavation records were later reviewed and re-analysed by the RCHM (E) who described four main phases of the site. The original farmstead consisted of a round house with outlying structures and this was replaced by a small rectangular three roomed "cottage". From AD150 this was replaced by a larger structure then gradually extended and modified, with the addition of a bathing suite and some rooms changed use, with one large room becoming a barn. This further developed with a North range including a large hall/room and separate bathing suite and a south range of working buildings, including a large aisled barn. Eventually, as the Roman infrastructure collapsed so too did the villa and the remains of a possible Saxon squatter were found under a collapsed roof. Rockbourne has its own coin hoard, discovered in 1967, consisting of 7717 bronze coins in a large New Forest pottery jar and dating from around AD295. Unfortunately only a small number of the coins remain at the museum, along with the jar.

As with all council owned sites, funding is being reviewed and there may be more opportunities for volunteer involvement in the running of the villa and its museum. Many thanks to David for a fascinating visit. **Steve Smith**

DIGGING at VINDOLANDA

I recently spent another very enjoyable week as a volunteer digger at the Roman Fort of Vindolanda, near Hadrian's Wall. The site is owned and managed by the Vindolanda Trust formed in 1970 by Robin Burley and now managed by his son Andrew. They are now in year four of a five year Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) plan to identify new sites of occupation between the Fort and the Vicus, the civilian settlement. Each year a team of enthusiastic volunteers help the trust, and the positions are usually taken within a few hours of their being made available on 1st November.



This year I was assigned to a trench within the Temple Avenue, the roadway leading to the unique temple-within-a fort, working alongside Peter Walker (EDAS Treasurer), removing a clay sealing underlying the road. The plan was to uncover an aerobic layer which may contain preserved organic remains such as wood, leather and even more writing tablets. The trench proved more complicated than expected with several intermediate deposits and a number of post holes, suggesting temporary structures, possibly barracks or even stables.

Some interesting Samian ware and glass artefacts were found along with several pieces of an intriguing, and unexplained, lead filled object.

It is always a privilege and very exciting to be able to spend a week working on such an internationally important site and although it is hard work I can thoroughly recommend it to anyone who would like to try some hands-on archaeology. **Steve Smith.**

EDAS FIELD TRIP 2011 – Pembrokeshire

The Chairman's Report

It was evident from the programme that Andrew produced for the June 2011 Field Trip based at St. David's that the group was in for an interesting, informative and well organised event. Even the weather which had been threatening turned out pleasant.

Eighteen members followed Andrew around the scenic panorama of Pembrokeshire, all of us accommodated in St. David's, the smallest city in Britain. As usual we met for dinner on the first night, Saturday 18th. June. The next day saw us all walking along a path towards St David's Head bordered by magnificent cliffs. Andrew assured us that this seemingly remote spot was littered with Mesolithic and Neolithic scattering of flint demonstrating a continuity of settlement over thousands of years. Walking some two miles brought us to an Iron Age Promontory Fort, Clawdd y Milwyr, where Andrew gave a talk on its structure and history. A number of late Neolithic tombs were next visited, all with interest in their structures and locations. The afternoon saw us visiting St. David's Bishops Palace; history tells us was visited by William the Conqueror, Edward I and his Queen. In the C12th Pope Calixtus decreed that two pilgrimages would equal one to Rome. From the Palace we visited a number of other monuments, including St. Non's Well and its ruined Church, then along the cliff top to Porth Clais the ancient port of St David's, then onto the rare Neolithic settlement at Clegyr Boia.

Monday saw us in Carew viewing a C11th sculptured Celtic Cross standing near Carew Church. We then went to Carew Castle, where we watched groups of children enjoying a variety of medieval experiences, followed by a visit to the nearby C18th tidal mill. The castle is a very imposing building, greatly modified in Tudor times and the mill is one of only four intact in Britain. The day should have concluded at St. Govan's Chapel, but due to the MOD we were forced to retire to a local café for tea and cake. Later some of us ventured into St David's Cathedral where we were encaptured by an enthusiastic guide who spent the afternoon showing us treasures we would otherwise have missed. He perfectly expressed his pleasure by saying "it was nice to talk to people who have a little knowledge!" How true.

Tuesday was a day off, but there was no respite as that evening led by Peter Crane, an archaeologist working for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, the group was initially taken to the Gribben at Solva, then a hardy few battled the wind and rain to cliff edge of Porth y Rhaw, amazing examples of Promontory Hill Forts. The next day saw us with Peter Crane once more when he took us round his excavation of a Norman Motte and Bailey Castle at Nevern. This was a large and complicated project and Peter went to great lengths to describe what was going on.. Then off to St. Brynach's 540 AD church, its many interests included a standing stone with both Ogham and Latin script. After an unscheduled visit to the surprisingly sparse Anglican church at Bayvil, we went to Castle Henlys where an Iron Age Settlement has been methodically reconstructed. Again, we were given an enthusiastic and stimulating tour by a guide, Roger Taylor. We then visited Pentre Ifans the most elegant of the region's early Neolithic portal dolmen burial chambers and to Carreg Ceotan which remains respected in a cluster of bungalows, both are located in a picturesque surroundings.

Thursday saw us going to Strumble Head, first to two Hill Forts, Garn Fawr and Garn Fechan, both regarded as Iron Age but may well be of earlier origin Then to LlanWnda where we saw a late Neolithic burial chamber with an enormous capstone and a splendid church with several early Celtic stones embedded in the walls. We moved on to see Garn Wen Cemetery which comprises three small burial chambers abutting the back gardens of a line of houses; there are possibly four others in the encroaching bracken. The afternoon saw us at Carreg Sampson another Neolithic portal dolmen chamber, regarded by some as the oldest megalithic monument in Wales. The afternoon was spent in the picturesque village of Porthgain, which in the early 1900's had been a prosperous harbour from which crushed granite was stored before shipment.

On Friday, Polly Groom, an archaeologist from CADW, led us on a 8 mile walk along the Golden Road, a Neolithic trackway, used as a trade route across the Mynydd Preseli. The Carn Menyn quarry is probably the main source of the blue stones of Stonehenge.

It was a pleasure to see so many new faces to this annual EDAS event and I am sure none were disappointed in what was a first class experience. No doubt Andrew will be pressurised to organise another field trip sometime in the future. We give him hearty thanks for the super job done this year. Next year Alan and Anita are planning to introduce us to the monuments of Exmoor. **John Day**

First Timer Perspective

Nineteen EDAS members met up in St David's – billed as Britain's smallest city (which it undoubtedly is!). Andrew Morgan had planned a full week's activities which encompassed everything from prehistoric sites to 19th century industry. Lesson 1 was learning to read the Welsh road signs – how can so many words have so few vowels!!)

All of the sites were located within absolutely stunning scenery, many on the coast itself. The 19th century ruins at **Porthgain** consisted of the shells of industrial buildings and large brick hoppers designed to store crushed granite, which were set back against a tiny harbour, this tiny port had once been a hub of activity in the early 1900s. At **Carew**, we saw an intact tidal mill, one of only four in Britain. It was certainly established in the 16th century and gained its power from a huge tidal pond

We looked at four medieval sites. Near at hand in **St David's**, the splendid Norman cathedral was built on the site of a monastery founded by the Welsh patron saint himself. We couldn't get into the nave however as filming was taking place; try as we might no 'famous faces' were glimpsed! Next door we toured the Bishop's palace – a superb group of medieval buildings, where money had been no object and where the Bishop who owed allegiance only to the king, entertained on a lavish scale. We compared this to the magnificent **Carew Castle**, with its complex architectural and ownership history. It was abandoned in the later 17th century when much of its stone was looted for building and lime burning. At **Nevern**, with archaeologist Pete Crane from the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, we were guided around a motte and bailey castle which is currently being excavated. This very atmospheric site, within woodland may have had Iron Age origins. Pete later informed us that they had confirmed the presence of a new entrance on the SW of the site and they have discovered a stirrup.

Irishman, St Brynach, a contemporary of St David founded a chapel in the 540s AD, the present church in **Nevern** village takes his name and both within the building and incorporated into the outside walls are 'memorial stones' commemorating Christians who worshipped here in the 5th and 6th centuries. Just outside the church is a 10th/11th century Celtic cross decorated with crisp interlace ornament, said to be one of the best in Wales. We also looked at the little church at **Llanwnda**, which again had inscribed stones set into the fabric of the building.

After looking at several Iron Age promontory forts, in particular at St. David's Head and Porth y Rhaw, with their tumbled stone walls defending small roundhouses, the visit to **Castell Henllys** brought everything vividly to life. Reconstruction of four excavated roundhouses with all their associated fixtures and fittings and a granary showed what life in the Iron Age was all about.

The Neolithic was well-represented, we marvelled at earth-fast burial chambers and portal dolmens where enormous flat cap stones, supported on pointed uprights, covered burial chambers excavated or looted long ago **Pentre Ifans** dated to 3500 BC and its huge capstone (weighing over 16 tons) is 5metres long and stands 2.4 metres off the ground; it appears to be delicately balanced on three triangular uprights. Originally stone covered and fronted by a semi-circular façade, it was a burial monument of very high status. This dolman and others we looked at were in rural countryside locations, more often than not only accessible by fairly strenuous climbs, but two sites were on the outskirts of habitation. **Carreg Coetan** in a well- groomed enclosure, was overlooked by affluent modern houses and by contrast, the three earth-fast burials of **Garn Wen** cemetery (just outside the modern town of **Goodwick**) are on the edge of a run-down council house estate. However when they were constructed on a slight but rocky terrace, they would have overlooked the ocean and would have had wide-ranging views of the surrounding landscape.

Our last day was spent walking in the Preseli Hills along the 'Golden Road', a Neolithic trackway which may have been used as a trade route for taking gold from Ireland to the rest of Britain as well as taking knowledge of the 'blue stone' source to Wessex.



Our guides were Polly Groom and Ffion Reynolds archaeologists working for CADW. Our first stop was at **Beddarthur**, a horse-shoe shape arrangement of 13 blue stones – was this the blue-print for Stonehenge? Nearby, and a steep climb, brought us to **Carn Menyn** which is an outcrop of spotted dolerite where it is likely that the Stonehenge bluestones were quarried. On top of the hill and right by the bluestone quarries was another burial cairn with huge capstone surviving.

Beddarthur circle with Carn Menyn outcrop on the horizon

Our final trek was downwards, through drizzly rain and right at the end of our trail we were greeted by a group of archaeologists excavating what looked like a degraded round barrow.

The name of the site was unintelligible and absolutely unpronounceable – **Croesmihangel** (ed. St Michael's Cross) Round Barrow at **Mynachlogddu!** (ed. the black monastery). Our friend Prof. Tim Darvill and his eminent colleague Prof. Geoffrey Wainwright explained that they were recovering environmental evidence which would help date the phases of the barrow (*stop-press: they later found an intact burial urn and cremation as well as evidence for earlier Neolithic activity*).

We reconvened in the evening for a well-earned supper and all agreed that the trip had been absolutely fantastic! Well done and huge thanks Andrew!! **Lilian Ladle**

DORSET ARCHAEOLOGICAL AWARDS 2011

This is a biennial event and you may remember that EDAS entered the Excavation at Worth Matravers.

It was held at Hinton St Mary, in the Tithe Barn of the manor house which belongs to the Pitt-Rivers family. The Chairman, Laurence Keen, offered his sincerest thanks to Mr Antony Pitt-Rivers and his wife Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Dorset Mrs Anthony Pitt-Rivers, for use of the facility.

Professor Geoffrey Wainwright, who we recently met swinging a mattock on his excavation deep in the Preseli Hills, was the guest of honour and presented the awards. Maureen Putnam, Chairman of the Selection Panel, gave a clear description of the key merits of each of the nine entries. All were worthy and very interesting in their own right, reflecting the strength of archaeology in Dorset.

The EDAS entry was awarded the runners-up prize. Maureen had praised the wealth and significance of the archaeology the team have uncovered, from Neolithic through to Roman, and the fine work achieved explaining the site to the community.

But the Dorset Archaeology Award 2011 went to the "Dig it" Community Archaeology Project submitted by the Priest's House Museum Trust, Wimborne Minster. Maureen had explained that this was an exemplary example of community archaeology that had offered the opportunity for hundreds of local people of all ages, whose interest had been raised by watching Time Team, to actually try practical archaeology. She also praised their excellent financial management and the oyster shell midden they had uncovered. Of course we were especially delighted because this is a local project and several EDAS members have been actively involved. Indeed two EDAS members were part of the award team and they beamed with obvious pleasure.

The final award of the evening was to Susann Parker, originally from South Africa, she was the grande dame of Portland who managed the ground breaking excavations on the Mesolithic site at Culverwell in the 1960's. At the time it was regarded as the oldest permanent settlement site in Britain. She had a fearsome reputation for not taking any prisoners.

We offer our thanks to the organisers and congratulations to all participants. **Andrew Morgan**

NEW EDAS EXCAVATION – WESTPORT, WAREHAM

Volunteers needed please!!

A recent watching brief has uncovered evidence for the remains of a clay tobacco pipe kiln on the outskirts of Wareham. Sited by the boundary wall of Westport House (Purbeck District Council offices) it overlooked the deep ditch of the Saxon walls.



Huge numbers of wasted clay pipes and kiln debris were located and the pipe maker has been identified as Augustus Moore who operated between 1830 and 1834. He was transported to Australia for theft in that year. A recent magnetometry survey by Dave Stewart, has indicated the kiln site and it is proposed to conduct an excavation between Monday 26th September and Saturday 8th October 2011 to extract further information about the kiln's construction.

Actual kiln sites are exceedingly rare, so this is a wonderful opportunity to add information to the record. As far as kiln sites go – this is of regional importance.

Can you help – do you want to be involved.

Contact Lilian Ladle 01929 553144 or email bestwall@tiscali.co.uk

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

| DATE | EDAS EVENTS - 2011 |
|--------------------------|---|
| August | Visit: Damerham Project excavations. Details have yet to be finalised but Martyn Barber says they are arranging an open weekend later in August. And he will send through details for anyone who would like to volunteer on the fieldwork project. See http://www.damerhamarchaeology.org . More details to follow shortly. |
| Wed 13th Sept | EDAS Lecture: "Buildings and Burials, Ritual and Rubbish - recent excavations at Worth Matravers" with Lillian Ladle MBE. |
| Sat 24 th Sep | Guided Tour of Salisbury Cathedral and a Blue Badge guided tour round the town. Please register your interest with Graham Adams: email g_s_adams@btinternet.com or tel: 01305 853935. More details to follow |
| Wed 26th Sep to 8th Oct | EDAS Excavation: of C19th Pipe Kiln at Westport Wareham, contact Lilian Ladle on tel: 1929 553144 or email bestwall@tiscali.co.uk |
| Wed 12th Oct | EDAS Lecture: "A Celtic feast: the tale of the Chiseldon cauldrons" with Dr Andrew Fitzpatrick of Wessex Archaeology |
| Wed 9th Nov | EDAS Lecture: "The Roman Invasion of Dorset and the Road System" with Peter Laurie of the Dorset Roman Conquest Group. |
| Wed 14th Dec | EDAS Lecture: "Early Mechanical Music" with Gordon Bartlett |

The monthly lectures start at 7.30pm. Walks and field visits usually meet at 10.00am for 10.30am start, at the published OS Grid Reference. Ring the leader if the weather is doubtful or if more details are required.