



East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER—October 2011

EDAS Lecture: Bones, Ritual and Rubbish with Lilian Ladle

Last month we had a whirlwind talk by our own Lilian Ladle; she gave an overview of the sensational excavations that took place in the Football Field at Worth Matravers. She talked about the original excavations undertaken by Southampton University students under David Hinton between 1990 -1993, which uncovered two iron age round houses and a Roman barn. She then covered the work undertaken by EDAS between 2006 – 2008, under the guidance of Phil Roberts, in preparation for the building of affordable housing by the Worth Community Property Trust (WCPT), which excavated a number of very impressive Late Iron Age storage pits. In May 2010 the project was handed over to Lilian, to oversee the preparations for a site access road. Luckily the development was delayed, because beneath the topsoil a lot of archaeology was discovered. This led to a five month dig of an area measuring 14m x 7m, all done by trowel, and it was completed in August 2010. In February 2011, the building development was back on track and the site was extended by removing a length of the field boundary wall, exposing an area that had been protected over the years from ploughing. EDAS members excavated in all weathers until May 2011, when the builders eventually moved in. In August 2011, whilst digging the foundations of the first house, the builders uncovered the outline of a skull. EDAS members returned assisted by several archaeology students and over the next five weeks a Post-Roman cemetery was excavated.

Lilian explained that the earliest structure is a Neolithic ditch which cuts the eastern edge of the site. The ditch contained fine pieces of flint, which Peter Bellamy has stated are of a type from the Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic period, accompanied by a small number of sherds, which are of typical Early Neolithic pots (c. 3600BC). It is possible that the ditch was part of a causeway.

The next structure exposed remains an enigma, it comprises two rows of small stone slabs set approx. 1 metre apart. Each row consists of two adjacent stones and they are arranged in two tiers. Many of the stones had a pointed end which was placed into the ground. This structure contained a few sherds of beaker pottery and a fine thumb nail scraper, which date the feature to the Early Bronze Age (c 2200BC).

At the next level was found a series of post holes which were stone lined and probably of the Late Bronze Age, but they contained no dating evidence. There were also the post pits of a Late Bronze Age roundhouse; after the timbers had been removed pot sherds had been placed as a closure deposit and dated (c 8-900BC). There was no evidence of stone walls.

Above this is a cobbled layer which extends throughout the excavation site and well beyond. It was covered by a midden comprising 20 -30 cm of rubbish. This has been dated to the important

transition period between the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age (c. 800-700BC). With hindsight we realise that it extended to the areas excavated by EDAS in 2006 – 2008 and David Hinton accepts it extended under the area he excavated as well. This is a very large area. It is of a type now being recognised as having great significance to the people of that time. It was used as a multi-purpose meeting place, where people would trade, undertake communal business and of course celebrations.

The midden was full of material including, pottery of the All Cannings Cross type, a lot of shale, animal bone - predominantly sheep, bone tools and spindle whorls. At the top of the midden was found a miniature American socketed axe. And significantly, in a small pit covered by a stone (which when turned was seen to be a quern stone), a small piece of glass was found. It has been carefully analysed by a national expert and it dates from Late Bronze Age (c. 600BC) making it the oldest piece of glass yet identified in Dorset. The glass originates from the Levantine, then it was probably shipped in bulk to Spain where the discovered item may have been manufactured.

Cut into this surface was a Middle Iron Age pit (c. 550 -150BC), one of the few to be found in Dorset, dated by a La Tene I brooch. A smaller pit was re-dug into it in the Late iron age.

There are a number of substantial Late Iron Age storage pits which were excavated between 2006-2008; some were carefully lined with stone. One had a broad stone lined shelf on the upper part and was named the Jacuzzi pit; others had been recut at a later period. One was in excellent condition, very carefully lined with stones and it was packed full of 2315 sherds, from over 130 pots. It also contained the skull of a large dog (c. 50BC – 50AD), which is a very important deposition (*see item below*). During the earlier excavations three adult burials were discovered, all females and all in a crouched position.

In 2010 EDAS members uncovered a length of wall from a Roman Building and in 2011 another length was uncovered containing impressive threshold stones. These are believed to be the rear and front of a second Roman Barn. Associated with this area were found 17 or 18 burials; all infants less than 6 months of age. These are probably examples of infanticide; the Romans believed that the child did not have a soul until it had cut its first teeth. One slightly older infant was buried within a stone cist. The building contained a great deal of shale, typically as lathe cores from the production of shale bracelets. There were also some fine metal objects, such as tweezers. The presence of sherds from pie-crust pots show that the site continued to be occupied into the post Roman period.

The final surprise of the site was the excavation of a Post-Roman cemetery. This has only been partially excavated because it extends beyond the development area. Over a five week period 26 burials were discovered including a triple burial and three double burials. The bodies were laid in a roughly east-west alignment. No grave goods were found apart from one buckle which has been dated to c. AD550.

For those of you who have not seen it yet, Lloyd Morgan made a short film of the 2010 excavation which is available online at: <http://www.lloydmorganproductions.co.uk/corporate/edas-archaeology-dig/>.

Andrew Morgan

15.09.11

THE LOST HOUND OF WORTH MATRAVERS



As mentioned in Lilian's talk about the Worth Matravers excavations, in 2007 the EDAS team excavated a remarkable Late Iron Age storage pit. It was quite beautifully constructed and when no longer required it was filled with a large quantity of material, mainly pottery but also animal bone and most significantly the skull of a large dog. The skull was carefully excavated and cleaned but then it just disappeared.

This skull is a very important find. It probably lies forgotten in somebody's shed or garage. Please check and if you find it contact Lilian Ladle, Phil Roberts or me directly so that it can be returned for proper analysis. This will be handled confidentially to avoid any embarrassment. There are only a few people who would have been allowed to take the item off-site and we are determined to retrieve the item.

Andrew Morgan

CBA Wessex Meeting: *'Religion and Ritual in Wessex'*

Saturday 5th November 2011: Talks starting at 10am prompt-

This promises to be a very interesting meeting and will be held at the splendid new Ordnance Survey Head Office building, Adanac Park, Redbridge Lane, Southampton SO16 0YP.

Directions: Follow M27 to junction 3. Exit M27 at junction 3 onto M271 southbound. Leave at junction 1 and take the first exit. At the first roundabout take the second exit, and continue to the next roundabout. At the second roundabout, take the third exit, signposted for the visitors' car park. The building is visible from the M271- look for the big OS logo!

Talks will be in the modern lecture hall – we are expecting and have space for c. 120 CBA Wessex members. There will be some great speakers covering a wide range of sites and periods, so something for everyone!

- Ron Hutton (University of Bristol) The Druids
- Josh Pollard (University of Southampton) The Sacred Chalk
- John Gale (University of Bournemouth The Knowlton complex
- Andrew Fitzpatrick (Wessex Archaeology) Iron Age shrines
- David Hinton (University of Southampton) Saxon religions
- Simon Roffey (University of Winchester) Medieval Charity

Tea and coffee will be provided.

Lunch: Please bring your own sandwiches/food.

Cost is £25 CBA Wessex/CBA members and £30 non-members – talks will start at 10am and finish c. 4pm

1. Reserve places by contacting WA by:

Tel: 01722 343406 or

email: a.manning@wessexarch.co.uk).

2. Payment: please send cheques made payable to 'CBA Wessex' and send to:

Andy Manning CBA Wessex,
c/o Wessex Archaeology,
Portway House,
Old Sarum Park,
Salisbury,
SP4 6EB

3. Confirmations: please enclose an email address or SAE so I can confirm I have received payment and your place is reserved.

4. Queries: Any problems or queries please contact Andy Manning at Wessex Archaeology 01722 326 867 or 01722 343406

Andy Manning: Meetings Secretary

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DATE	EDAS EVENTS – 2011
Mon 10th Oct to Sat 22 nd Oct	Excavation: through a potential Roman road, for the Sandford Heritage: Cordite Clay and Calluna Project, contact Lilian Ladle on tel: 01929 553144 or email bestwall@tiscali.co.uk
Wed 12th Oct	Please be advised this is a revision to the programme EDAS Lecture: "The life and times of Heywood Sumner" with Henry Coles
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.