



East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER – January 2012

PERSONALIA

Congratulations Davina



Members will be delighted to learn that another of their number has been awarded a PhD.. Davina Freedman, from Swanage, received her doctorate in Archaeology from The University of Reading on December 15th. Many members will remember her fascinating talk on the prehistoric rock art of Scotland. Congratulations to Davina from EDAS.

John Day

REQUEST TO MEMBERS

The majority of our members now receive the newsletter online by email, for which there is no financial cost to EDAS. But there are a number of members who still receive it by post, for which there is a postage charge and additional time and effort to prepare. Whilst we appreciate that some members can only receive the newsletter by post, we would request all members who have email to provide us with their email address so we can send their newsletters online. Please send details to Andrew Morgan, email: andrewmorgz@aol.com

EDAS LECTURE: Early Mechanical Music, with Gordon Bartlet

Perfectly in tune with the Christmas spirit, on the 13th December, Gordon Bartlet had his audience singing, or should I say mumouring, along to Marlene Dietrich's "Falling in love again" and smile knowingly when Sophie Tucker sang "I don't want to get thin". Gordon explained how home entertainment has developed over the last 200 years, and demonstrated some of his collection of mechanical music machines.

The earliest was a miniature barrel organ, called a serinette, that was built in France.



Housed in a wooden case it is played by turning a handle on the front. This pumps a bellows to supply air to pipes, and also turns a wooden cylinder on which a bewildering series of pins have been precisely positioned. As the cylinder rotates the pins open valves to let air through the pipes creating the musical sound. Most serinettes play eight different tunes. They were made between mid C18th and the end of C19th. As its name hints - "serin" being french for canary -it was used to teach tunes to canaries.

Gordon then showed us two music boxes from Switzerland dated 1855 and 1875. These are housed in beautifully crafted ornamental boxes. The components were made by families working on a co-operative basis, with the parts being put together to make the machine. These are powered by a clockwork motor which rotates a metal cylinder into which over 8,000 pins have been positioned to pluck a row of metal teeth of different lengths. The sound was harp-like, quite clear and surprisingly rich and we enjoyed some Verdi. Each cylinder would contain up to ten tunes and could be replaced.



The next innovation was the replacement of the cylinder by a perforated metal discs. Gordon demonstrated a 1875 Leipzig Disc Musical Box. The teeth of the comb are plucked by the metal lengths created by each slot, the lower notes from those near the centre and the higher towards the edge.

Perforated metal discs were also used with organettes. These contained wind channels and a bellows operated by a crank that also rotated the disc. The opening and closing of the valves was activated when the disc moving above it contained a hole corresponding to the respective tone. Most models were equipped with a range between 16 and 26 pitches and operated with the use of air suction.

By now manufacture of the devices was being undertaken in the USA. The Gem Roller Organ of 1890 -1900, was perfect for the travelling preacher who could impress a congregation in the morning and later he would replace the wooden cylinder and lead the barn dance in the evening. The Draper organette with valves similar to a harmonica had its music cut into a length of perforated paper.

Towards the end of the 19th century a major innovation came with the work of Thomas Edison who invented a dictaphone device. For the first time sounds could be recorded then re-played. But after failing to establish a market he rebranded it as a phonograph. This must have been a really magical experience. The machine Gordon showed was an impressive piece of engineering, but the technology was not perfect because it depended on using fragile wax cylinders

Emile Berliner took this on further and developed the disc record gramophone, using hard discs made from chalk/slate dust bonded by shellac which are readily mass produced. We are all familiar with its big horn, but the device has no volume control, hence the term “put a sock in it”. The final piece looked quite modern, at least to most EDAS members, a HMV portable gramophone with smart chrome parts, perfect for a picnic in the 1930’s.

We really appreciated the meticulous work undertaken by Gordon, who has restored all the machines himself as well as making some of the metal discs and the paper feed for the organette, how he worked out the positions for the notes remains a mystery.

I know everyone enjoyed the talk and we thank Gordon for this unusual but very rewarding evening.

Andrew Morgan

EDAS EXCAVATIONS - Update

FROME HOUSE, WAREHAM - NGR SY 9213 8710

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in March/April 2011 during groundwork associated with building work and the replacement of a gas pipe between the house and Worgret Road to the north. No archaeological features were present in the vicinity of Frome House itself; however, a large feature was evident in part of the services trench. This consisted of brick, limestone and raw clay together with 'muffle' material indicative of a clay tobacco pipe kiln. A layer of crushed brick suggested an ancillary building close by. The spoil by the side of the trench yielded over 2000 tobacco pipe wasters. A number of fluted pipe bowls were decorated with the initials 'A' and 'M' and have been identified as those made by Augustus Moore and produced between 1830 and 1834. The kiln was short-lived as Moore was transported to Australia in 1834 for theft.

During September 2011, East Dorset Antiquarian Society members investigated the site further and although the kiln itself was not located, the work implied that any remains may lie at a greater depth than that excavated. A further 4536 fragments of clay tobacco pipe were found, together with kiln demolition material and contemporary pottery and metalwork.

SANDFORD HEATH, WAREHAM ST MARTIN - NGR SY 9410 9018

A small excavation was carried out in October 2011 as part of the community-based Sandford Heritage Project and supported by EDAS members, to investigate the origins of a straight trackway through the heath from Sandford to Holton Heath, known locally as the 'Roman Road'.

A single trench 1.20m wide by 17m long was cleared by a mechanical excavator. This cut through part of the track as well as through a series of linear banks and ditches on its north side. The trench was then cleaned by hand and the excavated section exposed a typical heathland sequence comprising an upper layer of decaying vegetation overlying bleached sands and iron pan. A small, serrated flint flake and a flint core are evidence of prehistoric activity in this area before the heath developed. There was however, no evidence for any road or track metalling. The banks and ditches are probably part of a tree planation which was noted on the Tithe map of 1843.

EAST HOLTON, WAREHAM ST. MARTIN - NGR SY 9610 9130

An archaeological investigation was undertaken by volunteers of the Sandford Heritage Project, supported by EDAS members, in October 2011. Three offset trenches measuring 5m long and 2m wide were hand dug and five features were identified in the central trench. These comprised a gravel spread, three discrete deposits of pottery and remnants of a possible hearth. The pottery (349 sherds weighing 4249g) was all quartz tempered and consisted of fragments, many of them large, from pitchers, jugs, cooking jars and bowls dating to the mid- to late-12th century. It is likely that contemporary settlement is in the near vicinity.

Lilian Ladle

EDAS FIELD TRIP: to Exmoor 9th – 16th June 2012

If you have not already had details and would like more information or booking form for this year's Field Trip, contact email - alhawk@ntlworld.com

Alan Hawkins

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DORSET HISTORY CENTRE: Archive & Local Studies - Temporary Closure for 3 weeks in 2012. DHC will be undergoing significant building work in its public research areas and other areas of the building. The work will create improved public facilities and allow staff to better manage the building. In addition, upon re-opening, the DHC will become the new home of the Dorchester Register Office. The two services will operate a shared reception facility.

Work originally planned to take place early in 2012, has now been delayed and now likely to take place in March or April. Anyone planning a visit to the DHC should check dates of closure in advance of their visit for details

Watch this space - <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/dorsethistorycentre/2012closure> - Email; archives@dorsetcc.gov.uk. Tel 01305 250550

Alan Hawkins

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DATE	EDAS EVENTS – 2012
Wed 11th Jan	EDAS Lecture: "Kingston Lacy House" with James Graseby of the National Trust
Wed 8th Feb	EDAS Lecture: "Archaeological Illustration - Talk and demonstration" with Nick Griffiths FSA
Wed 14th Mar	EDAS Annual General Meeting , followed by Members Evening: EDAS Field Trip 2011 "Adventures in Pembrokeshire" with Andrew Morgan
Wed 18th Apr	EDAS Lecture: "The Damerham Project" with Dr Helen Wickstead MIFA of Kingston University and Martyn Barber, English Heritage
Wed 9th May	EDAS Lecture: "The Big Dig and Banjo's at Winterborne Kingston. Investigating the daily lives of the Durotriges" with Dr Miles Russell of Bournemouth University.
Sat 9th June to Sat 16 th June	EDAS Field Trip: To Exmoor, details of the programme will follow shortly.

Please Note:

- 1) The monthly lecture will start at 7.30pm.
- 2) 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.