



East Dorset Antiquarian Society

www.dorset-archaeology.org.uk

mail@dorset-archaeology.org.uk

Edited by: Andrew Morgan, email: andrewmorgz@aol.com , tel: 01202 731162

NEWSLETTER – February 2012

Newsletters by email

Thank you, to the many members who have sent their email addresses so they can receive the newsletter by email. If you haven't done so yet, please send details to Andrew Morgan, email: andrewmorgz@aol.com

EDAS LECTURE: The Anonymous Lemur with James Grasby, Regional Curator National Trust.

Within seconds of being introduced James had flattered his audience of antiquarians and changed the title of his talk. He then discussed several challenges facing the National Trust and its relationship with us, the visitor. He is a particular man, tall, dressed in sombre suit and well-polished shoes, with long hair controlled in a knot at the nape of his neck, with the knowing smile of a natural and delightful orator.

First he discussed how we should approach a work of art, distinguishing between the aesthetic value and its provenance and background. These are two separate criteria; they can be complementary but on occasion information can diminish aesthetic pleasure. James explained that he owned a treasured print "Le Rat de Madagascar" whose enigmatic look has given him pleasure for over twenty years. But lately he had undertaken on-line research and found its scientific classification and an appreciation that the print had probably been taken from a copy of Comte de Buffon's book, *Histoire Naturelle, générale et particulière*. But, whilst saluting the research centre that continues the work, James realised that this information has not added to his pleasure, he loves his anonymous lemur, and will continue to enjoy it for its look and not for what it is.

As a curator with the National Trust, he encourages visitors to look initially at the houses and their collections in the same way. Finding out what things are can be a great distraction, enjoy them without feeling you need to know what everything is. He cited his own behaviour when recently visiting Le Louvre. He joined the hordes as they approached each magnificent painting and immediately focused on the small explanatory note positioned alongside, spending more time reading than studying the priceless exhibit itself. James exhorted that we should do the research in our own time, the time spent in the gallery is precious and should be devoted to the collection.

The NT are custodians, their challenge is to bring the past to life and enable the visitor to fully engage with the exhibits in the context of house and garden. He worried about his observation that some visitors to Stourhead reluctantly visit the house almost as a penance, before strolling out with easy pleasure into the gardens.

He eventually returned to his original theme and mentioned a Dutch cinematographer making a film about Delftware, who visited Kingston Lacy and quietly cried when shown a tulip vase bearing the face of William of Orange, one of several rare pieces from the C17th. This very personal reaction was surely due to his appreciation of the item's rarity and relevance in Dutch history, when this recently independent country faced a challenge to its international trade that resulted in breweries converting to potteries to replicate Chinese porcelain and the creation of a new export market in Delftware. These are just some of the

priceless treasures found in the house. Recently an insurance expert placed a value of over £110million on the contents of a single living room.

James was conscious that some EDAS members would be very knowledgeable about Kingston Lacy but he explained that from the C17th to the late C20th it was the family seat of the Bankes family. They had previously resided nearby at Corfe Castle until its destruction in the English Civil War when Sir John Bankes and Dame Mary supported Charles I. This made him reflect on the morality of the NT promoting Civil War re-enactments as family fun events. Whilst they admirably demonstrate authentic clothing and weaponry, surely there is a moral issue about presenting for family entertainment a brutal war that caused the death of thousands of people.

After the restoration Charles II rewarded their support and enabled Sir John Bankes to select a site for a new home on the Lacy Estate. The house was finished by his son Ralph Bankes. The original house was designed by Sir Roger Pratt with the interiors designed by Inigo Jones, and was built between 1663 and 1665 by his heir John Webb. For many years, the house was believed entirely constructed by Jones, until the plans of Webb were discovered. Under the guidance of William John Bankes between 1835 and 1838 the house was extensively remodelled by Sir Charles Barry. He faced the brick with stone, added a tall chimney to each corner, and lowered the ground level on one side, exposing the basement level and forming a new principal entrance. William was an adventurous man of many talents, he provided most of the antiquities that form part of the house's collections, from his travels through Europe, the Middle East and the Orient. But in 1841, due to some indiscretions, he was forced into exile.

Upon his death in 1981, Henry John Ralph Bankes bequeathed the Kingston Lacy estate to the national Trust, it included 12 working farms, Corfe Castle and 8,000 acres of countryside. He imposed a single caveat, that they maintain his herd of red North Devon cattle. Otherwise Ralph Bankes was confident the NT would make the right decisions as necessary.

James was particularly pleased that the household books of the Kingston Lacy estate have been catalogued and deposited in the Dorset History Centre and he emphasised that they are available for research.

James concluded by offering to conduct a tour of Kingston Lacy. We thank James for a very entertaining and thoughtful evening and I know that we look forward to visiting Kingston Lacy, with fresh eyes, in the near future.

Andrew Morgan

PRACTICAL ARCHAEOLOGY OPPORTUNITIES - WIMBORNE TOWN SQUARE

I am sure most of you are aware that Wimborne Square is in the course of being “enhanced”. There are opportunities for EDAS members to become involved in the project.

Firstly, as the Square is an archaeologically sensitive area a watching brief is required throughout the duration of the work. The Council are happy for local residents to be involved with the project and it has been agreed with them and the Senior Archaeologist that EDAS members can help with the watching brief.

The re-development of the Square will be running until the end of May. A watching brief is only required when holes are actually being dug but the Contractors may only be able to give short notice when someone is required. It will all depend on how well the project is running and could literally be the day before. If there are any members of EDAS who would like to be involved in the watching brief and are happy to be on call at any time during the course of the work, for however short a period, can they let me know so I can draw up a list and let the Council and Contractors know.

Secondly, the existing tree in the middle of the Square is to be removed for safety reasons. It is planned that a replacement tree will be planted close by. Before the new tree is planted an excavation of a 6m x 3m area is required. This will be conducted over a two week period starting on the 27th February and run by the Priest's House Museum. Directing the excavation will be Keith Childs and Emma Ayling, the Curator of the Priest's House Museum. I will be acting as support for them, as contact-between the Museum and EDAS and will co-ordinate the list of volunteers.

If you would like to help with either the watching brief or the excavation or would like any further information please contact me on agbroadbent@btinternet.com or telephone me on 01202 841547.

Any finds will, of course, go to the Museum and if you feel unable to help with the excavation but would like to help with the finds processing please let me know.

Gill Broadbent

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

Tel- 01202 668178 Mob 07985 957235

DORSET HISTORY NETWORK

The next event by the Dorset History Network (formerly the Dorset History Forum) will be a day school entitled: **Exploring the Collections at the Dorset History Centre**, to be held at the Dorset History Centre in Dorchester on Saturday 25th February. For those receiving the newsletter by email the programme is on the last page.

Joanna Booth

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DATE	EDAS EVENTS – 2012
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.



Exploring the Collections at the Dorset History Centre

Saturday 25 February 2012 - 9.45am to 4.30pm

Cost: £10 (lunch is available by prior booking at an additional cost of £5)

Pay and display car parking is available at the Dorset History Centre @ £3.40 for the day

Programme

- 9.45am Arrival and registration
- 10.00am Dorset Archives Trust – Annual General Meeting
- 10.30am Tea/Coffee break
- 10.45am *Welcome – Mrs. Anthony Pitt-Rivers, Lord Lieutenant of Dorset*
- 11.00am *1742 and all that – The birth of the Garden Centre - Martin Stewart, MD of Stewarts Garden Centres, Wimborne and Christchurch*
- 11.55am *Dorset History Centre – A review of 2011-12 - Sam Johnston, County Archivist*
- 12.20pm Lunch
- 13.30pm *The pleasure of an anonymous lemur : how do we share the secrets of Kingston Lacy without spoiling the surprises - James Grasby, Regional Curator, National Trust; Bankes of Kingston Lacy*
- 14.30pm *Tales from the Shaftesbury Borough Archive - Stephen Forshaw, Shaftesbury Project Archivist, Dorset History Centre*
Short comfort break
- 15:15pm *Dorset History Network – Creating a history community in Dorset - Jacqui Halewood, Chair Dorset History Network*
- 15:45pm Close and Tea/Coffee or Optional Tour of DHC

Exploring the Collections at Dorset History Centre - Booking Form

No. attending event @ £10 ea: No. of lunches required @ £5 ea:

Name(s):.....

Address:.....

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Tel:..... **E-mail:**.....

Please make cheques payable to Dorset Archives Trust and send to

Cynthia Hart, Hon. Membership Secretary, 1 Wellbottom Cottage, Winterbourne Abbas, Dorchester, Dorset. DT2 9EB