



## East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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### NEWSLETTER – Midsummer 2012

#### **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.**

We had an excellent turnout for our end of season lecture, requiring extra rows of seating to be arranged. The Celtic tribe of Dorset is always a popular subject and we enthusiastically welcomed Miles Russell back to EDAS.

Miles started by reminding us how little we actually know about the Durotriges. Even their name - and he stated his preference for the softer form of its pronunciation “duro'treegays” as opposed to the awkward alternative - it was first recorded by Ptolemy, the Greek geographer writing c. AD 140-150, the name has been translated as meaning “dwellers by the water” or “land of the fort kings”. But was this just a Roman name of convenience, did the tribe recognise it?

The Durotriges were established in the public eye by Mortimer Wheeler who tackled his excavation of Maiden Castle in the 1930's, with a Sandhurst-trained imagination. He set out to find evidence that the Durotriges were the fierce tribe mentioned by the historian Suetonius when describing the campaign fought by the Second Legion Augusta led by Vespasian. However, recent analysis of the finds has gradually unpicked some of his evidence. But Miles explained that whatever their name, this tribe was quite distinctive and was the least Romanised of the tribes of southern England: unlike most other Celtic tribes they practised inhumation and buried their dead in a crouched position with heads to the north facing east; they minted coins with an abstract pattern derived from the coins of Philip of Macedon, but without inscriptions; they built and continued to occupy hillforts, long after other tribes had abandoned them; and they made distinctive black burnished-ware pottery.

The Bournemouth University project was set up to investigate how ordinary people were affected by the transition from a traditional Durotriges lifestyle to that of a Roman. They intended to find several Late Iron Age (LIA) sites that were not hillforts, where there was no villa but had evidence of Roman trade goods.

That changed when they arrived at Winterborne Kingston, where field walking had found a great deal of suitable material, with many sherds of amphorae, some Durotrigian coins, and samples of standard domestic metalwork. During 2007-2008 an extensive magnetometry survey was undertaken which showed up numerous pits, ditches and surprisingly they detected the shape of a Banjo Enclosure. These are associated with elite settlements and in areas of very good arable land. They are normally dated in the period 400-100BC and often found in groups of between 2 – 6 enclosures.

In 2009 BU started excavating and dug three trenches to investigate what they had found. Because so much material had been found within the plough soil, and because this was now a training dig with many keen student resources, ie. cheap labour, Miles decided to uncover the site by hand – a

huge task. In 2010 they returned, but this time using diggers to uncover a larger area. By 2011 they had completed the excavation of the banjo-enclosure including all the ditches and pits. EDAS committee member Dave Stewart has worked on the site from the start with responsibility as Trench Director for Trench C.

The analysis work is well underway but many questions have yet to be answered. The enclosure has a ditch with an external bank. The northern section is used as a field boundary with a hedge running along its length. There is little material from the ditch, but it provides a date of c. 400BC. The entrance way contains a lot of animal bone including 25 horse skulls which may have been arranged as a display. There are four hut circles at the back of the enclosure but as yet it is not known whether they were contemporary.

There are 68 storage pits, most dated to c. 200BC. The pits are evenly distributed but no patterns of usage have been identified yet. Most are approx. 1.5m deep and 90% of the pits were back-filled quickly. Many have a basal deposition, comprising skeletons of cows, horses, dog, and human remains, as well as querns and pots. The human remains appear to have been dumped into the pits, rather than being buried. Why and who were they? There were three dog skeletons. Most animal bones have been butchered then deposited in rough anatomical order (one lamb had six legs) and when present the human body was rolled on top of an animal deposit. One third of the pits feature a composite skeleton; a combination of cow and horse parts, eg. a horse skull and a cow jaw. There are numerous examples of pots with holes cut into the base

Several pits have been re-used for burials, possibly because the fill was easier to dig. There are 15 burials in the typical Durotrigan style with pottery grave goods. A brooch has been found behind some of the heads, possibly used to tie a funerary shroud. The skeletons are dated to AD50-80 and exhibit no sign of trauma. It appears that the banjo-enclosure was no longer in use but perhaps still revered as an ancient site.

Then there is a gap lasting approximately 200 years with no evidence of occupation or use, until the presence of ceramic Roman tiles found in a linear ditch c. AD200-300. There are also examples of mortared flint from a rectangular building which interestingly has the same internal area as a typical IA round house. And there is an enigma: four terrace cuts that were covered with a grey ashy soil dating from mid-late C3rd. There are no post-holes, but there are pieces of prestigious material such as samian ware, glass, a stunning camel bone handle and wall plaster. Explanations wanted!

Miles concluded that whilst the original project plan may not have been achieved, this is an exceptional archaeology site which is greatly adding to our knowledge of the Durotriges as well as raising many more questions. Previously, banjo-enclosures were associated with Wiltshire rather than Dorset and at least another two have been identified nearby. There is evidence of a multi-roomed building, which is probably a much degraded Roman Villa. He reminded us that Dorset didn't have villas until C4th and they tended to be top of the range, highly Romanised and expensive. Why did this happen in this area, quite different from what was happening elsewhere? And there is much evidence of the impact of Christianity, Dorset having some of the best examples of Christian artefacts.

In 2012 the project will continue, looking into the Roman sites and extending the excavation into the area which is now covered by the very high spoil heap. There will be an open day around 1<sup>st</sup> July. Check the web-site for information <http://microsites.bournemouth.ac.uk/big-dig-2012/>

We thank Miles for an excellent talk and I am sure many of us will visit the site in July.

**Andrew Morgan**

## **EDAS ARCHAEOLOGY REPORTS**

### **Clay Tobacco Pipe Kiln, at Westport, Wareham**

**Post Excavation:** Volunteers are needed to process the finds. The work will be undertaken at the NT barn at Corfe Castle on the basis of one day per week. All welcome – lots to do!

Contact Lilian Ladle for further information. Tel: 01929 553144, email: [bestwall@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bestwall@tiscali.co.uk)

*Robert Lancaster and Lilian Ladle*

### **Druce Farm Roman Villa**

**Start Date: August (TBC) - Volunteers needed.**

We expect to start in August but are dependent on the time of harvest. All those who have registered an interest will be contacted directly.

Contact Lilian Ladle for further information. Tel: 01929 553144, email: [bestwall@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bestwall@tiscali.co.uk)

*Lilian Ladle*

### **EDAS FIELD TRIP to EXMOOR, arranged by Alan and Anita Hawkins.**

Huge thanks to Alan and Anita for taking us to Exmoor and arranging an excellent programme to explore this lovely area. We seemed to be in constant denial of the weather forecasters – rain, rain and more rain - but we were able to complete everything we had planned, albeit with waterproofs at hand. We started in the sun, when we joined the Exmoor Society on a walk across Brendon Common led by Robert Wilson–North, archaeologist with the Exmoor National Park Authority. And very soon he introduced us to an example of strange Exmoor archaeology: a Stone Setting comprising four miniliths arranged in the shape of a kite, each protruding a mere 0.5metre above the ground. There are 60 such settings on the moors, but they are easily covered by vegetation and can disappear when the peat is wet. We followed the edge of the old Royal Forest and learned about its enclosure and purchase by John Knight an ambitious entrepreneur whose family tried various schemes to extract profit from the land. Knight brought in an army of Irish labourers to erect 30 miles of wall round his estate all covered in carefully planted beech trees, which somehow flourished and still form a stunning boundary. Rob explained that Exmoor has always been marginal land, and has never supported a large population, when conditions deteriorate or opportunities occur elsewhere, people leave. This has protected the land and the archaeology and may partially explain why some of it is so particular to the area and so small in size. We visited a deserted medieval village (DMV) used by RD Blackmore as the village of the Doone family, albeit sometime after it had been abandoned. The following day promised downpours but most of the group, confident in their wet weather gear, made it to Larkbarrow a short lived dairy farm enterprise encouraged by the Knights, and onto Dunkery Beacon just about visible in the low clouds, which occasionally broke to offer distant views.

We enjoyed our visit to Dunster castle, once a Saxon burgh, and now resplendent in fineries purchased by the wealth of Mary Tregonwell – heiress of Milton Abbas – who in 1680 married Francis Lutterell the owner of the estate. The guides were very enthusiastic and explained many treasures including leather panels covered in silver foil to emphasise the sheen of armoured soldiers, painted in scenes from the life of Cleopatra. We walked round pretty Dunster, followed

by a spontaneous perambulation round the Iron Age hillfort of Bat's Castle that proved an enjoyable challenge.



**A break in the clouds over Dunkery Beacon – umbrella optional**

**Pure-bred Exmoor Ponies – mealy muzzle and black points**

The following day we visited Simonsbath and the Knights' water-powered sawmill. This is being restored by volunteers who enthusiastically shared their knowledge and demonstrated the water mill, which emptied the leat, and an ancient engine made in Lincoln, that demanded constant attention as it puffed away to a mechanical symphony. We walked along the leat and learnt about the distinctive Exmoor ponies and the breeding habits of salmon. Later we climbed an excellent Norman motte and bailey castle in Parracombe, built to dominate the north Exmoor routes. We also visited the old church dedicated to St Petrock (the Celtic saint from Cornwall), where church pews had been adjusted to cater for a double-bass. The day ended with the traditional fish supper, with or without mushy peas.

Wednesday is the usual day off when we made our own arrangements: a journey on a steam train; an exploration down the Barle Valley, including Eliza's Wheal a failed copper mine; a visit to exquisite gardens; a rummage round a remote and neglected church at Culbone.

On the penultimate day we visited The Valley of the Rocks near Lynton, which has the remains of a Bronze Age settlement, probably from about 1000BC when people left the moors. In the afternoon we walked down the Badgworthy Valley, also known as the Doone Valley to the same DMV we had seen on the opening day, but well worth the return.



**Della leads the invasion of the Motte and Bailey Castle**



**Idyllic NT tea room at Selworthy**

We finished the week with a visit to Porlock and went to the church of St Dubricius, an important Celtic saint from C5th, whose tall tales have not been forgotten and will be re-enacted by local

school children later this year. We then gathered at Selworthy and walked up to Bury Castle – a fine example of a small ‘Hill Slope’ enclosure and finished in the pretty NT tea room for a well-earned pot of tea and a piece of lemon drizzle cake, yum. The trip was celebrated with a rather a fine dinner at the Crown Hotel at Exford.

Many thanks again to Alan and Anita.

**Andrew Morgan**

### DORSET HISTORY NETWORK

Dorset History Network is planning a joint event with the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society as part of the Festival of British Archaeology in July. The event is “Digging for History” – Archaeology and Dorset’s Local History which will be held on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2012 in the Victorian Hall at the Dorset County Museum. The speakers include Julian Richards, Archaeologist and Broadcaster, Professor David Hinton of Southampton University and Industrial Archaeologist Dr Peter Stanier.

**Joanna Booth**

### Wareham and District Archaeology & Local History Society Meeting

**Wednesday September 26<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm**

**Lecture: Recent Excavations at Westport, Wareham and Augustus Moore, disgraced tobacco pipe maker**, with Robert Lancaster, Lilian Ladle and Heather Schornhorst

During 2011 and 2012 Robert, Lilian and Heather together with a number of volunteers have excavated the remains of a tobacco pipe kiln, which was sited outside modern Wareham House. The pipes were identified as those made by Augustus Moore between 1830 and 1834. At Dorchester Assizes in 1834, he was found guilty of stealing in Wareham and transported to Australia. It is rare to find the remains of a tobacco pipe kiln, but we also have the documentary trail both here and in Australia that has uncovered part of the extraordinary life history of this hapless man and his family.

Excavated items will be on display and Robert will be delighted to identify any clay pipes you may have.

**Lilian Ladle**

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

| DATE                              | EDAS EVENTS – 2012   |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Wed 12 <sup>th</sup><br>September | <b>EDAS Lecture:</b> “The Chiseldren Cauldron”, with Dr Andrew Fitzpatrick, Wessex Archaeology |
| Wed 10 <sup>th</sup><br>October   | <b>The David Johnson Memorial Lecture:</b> with Tim Schadla-Hall                               |
| Wed 14 <sup>th</sup><br>November  | <b>EDAS Lecture:</b> “The Lands of the Queen of Sheba – Myth, History and Endemics” Ian Lewis  |
| Wed 12 <sup>th</sup><br>December  | <b>EDAS Lecture:</b> “Were the Romans like us”, with Geoff Taylor                              |