



East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER –January 2013

AGM and Election of Committee

John Day is standing down as Chairman at the AGM in March and is not standing for re-election. If you are interested in standing for this position or require more information before doing so please contact our Secretary Brian Maynard Tel: 01202 677707. Email: brian.retired@ntworld.com

In accordance with the Constitution, 2 general members of the committee must stand down each year. Della Day and Andrew Morgan are standing down and are not standing for re-election as general members of the committee. We are therefore looking for 2 new members and if you are interested in getting involved in the running of the Society then this is your chance to do so.

Nominations for Chairman or a general committee member should be submitted on the attached slip (see end of Newsletter) and returned to Brian Maynard no later than 11 February 2013, the date of our next committee meeting.

Peter Walker

EDAS 30th Anniversary Article

We have asked a number of members and friends who have had a long association with EDAS, to write an article to share some personal experiences they have had with the society. It is only fitting that the first to be published has been written by John and Della.

Belonging to East Dorset Antiquarian Society, by John and Della

“EDAS does not live in the past but learns by it; it is not a social club but is sociable; it is not initiated by or developed by one or two persons but all the membership and many friends.”

It is a pleasure to reflect on our experiences in the East Dorset Antiquarian Society. Both of us have found it informative, enjoyable and interesting. The annual field trips to many parts of England, and one to Spain, have been some of the most enjoyable holidays we have ever had. On such trips we learn a lot about archaeology, history, our colleagues and ourselves, often with surprise.

On one such trip Mary Crabtree locked her keys in her car. How does one overcome such disaster? To our amazement, and concern, we were disbelieving in the number of members with expertise to unlock the car door without keys! Another occurrence which brought laughter to some, and tears to one young boy, the son of one of our members, who fell into a prehistoric rock pool full of water on Dartmoor. We have not seen him on a field trip since!

One of the things we learned was never to be too quick to tell others of the interpretation of the artefacts you find. An example of this was when we were once asked by the National Trust to remove a tree in the grounds of Badbury Hunting Lodge. Being near Iron Age and medieval features and close to the Ackling Dyke it was anticipated something would be found. There, at the base of the tree sure enough were strips of

leather, obviously parts of Roman sandals. Having expressed enthusiastic delight at such a find we were embarrassed when the tenant of the lodge sidled sheepishly up to us and said he liked coconuts, would often eat them while sat by the tree and drop the husks on the ground!

A further lesson was during the construction of Blandford Bypass. There while excavating a Bronze Age settlement, with pits, ditches and round houses was a depression shaped like a coffin. Great excitement, the first inhumation of Bronze Age origin. Mind you there were no bones, but no matter, that did not alter our interpretation until Martin quietly said to us "I have seen depressions like this before, when trees have fallen down!

And again, an inhabitant living in the centre of Horton found bones in her garden and thought it something to do with cats. We undertook what was obviously a week end excavation. We found the skeleton of an adolescence lying on the fill of a ditch. First lesson, never believe you are doing a week end dig. They are the digs that go on for ever. The garden was separated from the church burial ground by a metal fence so obviously that part of the garden had once been part of the cemetery. Much profound discussion went on about the change of boundaries during the Reformation period. Our in depth historical knowledge was incredible and coming in useful for the interpretation. That is until the local builder came up to us and said did we know that during the war metal railings were removed to make armaments. Of course we knew, so what. He went on to say the church warden lived in this house and was a keen gardener, when the railings were replaced he made sure he had a bigger garden! Later we found evidence for this in the church wardens' accounts, though I think the Diocesan officials were unaware of the invasion of church property! Further excavation revealed that yes indeed, the householders had continued to garden the cemetery. But that was not all. The skeleton did not lay on the fill of a ditch but the fill of a pit that had a neighbouring pit! Wonderfully this fitted in with our religious beliefs that we were faced with a Henge monument that went around the church; demonstrating once more that Christian history is an extension of pagan history. But actually the circle of pits went in the opposite direction, under the road, not around the church. Never mind, they were near enough to the church to allow us to maintain our beliefs in the continuity and integration of religious beliefs. Along with the skeleton were Saxon, medieval and post medieval shards. Strangely all interpretations from us fell silent at this point. The householder though was super; she gave us brandy to recover from our distress and confusion. At the same time told us her husband was seriously ill in the house but interested in our activities. Her husband had been a diplomat in Moscow and with other diplomats was having dinner with Khrushchev when they were told of the American Gary Young flying a spy plane over Russia. Khrushchev was so angry that the only person he would speak to was her husband. We were so busy that I failed to ask her if I could visit her husband, an omission I have always regretted. Perhaps one may say bad planning but at the same time we were helping with a dig on the other side of the road, organised by the Verwood Pottery Trust, of a 17th c. Pottery Kiln.

On digs, surprises are frequent. I can recall our excavating a road of unknown date, but possibly Roman, at Stony Cross in the New Forest, directed by David Johnston. He was very fastidious in his demands to us pupils and one day as the others cleared up to go home I was left sat on the balk tediously measuring and drawing the sides of the excavation. David sat beside me, I was sure he was going to commend me on the pains I was taking when he took paper and pencil from my hand and said "*look John its much quicker this way*" and drew the levels rapidly and expertly free hand much better than my own mentally torturous way. On our Batts Bed dig a respected member and myself were trowelling away in two quarters of a pit when the respected member pointed out a piece of decorated pot in the quarter next to me. Until that moment I had found nothing. With a knowing glance from the respected member I looked round quickly, no one was watching, the shard was rapidly transferred to my side. Shortly after David Johnston came up, looked at the now virgin surface where the shard had been and said "*I put a piece of pot there, I see someone has moved it*". Knowing glances and grins from him in the other quarter told David who the culprit had been. Never again did I resort to such behaviour to increase my finds count. An embarrassing moment was during the Bucknowle excavation, a 17 year dig of a Roman Settlement at Corfe Castle. After being responsible for organising the trowelling and brushing of a 20 m x 20m square I stood proudly looking over the clean and shining surface. Someone beside me said "*look there is something laying in the square*". Sure enough in the middle was a blade of grass. My companion was persistent, this should be collected. He was obviously an inexperienced lad. No one was going to walk over this perfect surface for a blade of grass, which would no

doubt get blown away by the wind. But he was insistent, so off I went, over the pristine surface, to teach him a lesson. I returned with a Roman Brooch!

A proud moment was on receiving a reward from Prince Philip for my contribution to Dorset Archaeology. Before the event was organised I asked whether it could be presented to EDAS but the rules forbade this, it was for an individual award. But everyone knows that I was really accepting it on behalf of the society as any contribution I was believed to have made could only have been done by the active participation of the many members behind me.

While 30 years have seen success there have been lapses, particularly in the early years when research into the Allen Valley faded away. Due mainly to some members moving house and new members taking different geographical interests. But also by my not taking the sound advice of Teresa Hall, who said we should research the valley, one parish at a time. I felt it was better to walk all accessible fields in the valley then write them up as one project. Who do you think was sensible! To our dismay Teresa moved from Dorset but living in Wells she became a member of Time Team and through her we have benefited with contact with Prof. Mick Aston. It was later a pleasure that Time Team extended our major excavation of a Roman and Medieval site at Minchington. To be party to their project was very pleasing.

There are so many people responsible for the progress of EDAS that to name them all would entail many pages. There was Ian Hewitt with whom I use to argue about how the Newsletter should be formulated, Norman Field who directed us on a number of Roman Roads, Professor Mick Aston who had us field-walking and digging test pits in Shapwick, Somerset, Jude James who with his enviable knowledge of Dorset History supplied us with much information and support, Martin Green whose farm is a pre-historic gold mine and himself an archaeologist of renown, allowing his farm to be a testing ground for many EDAS members and a site for practical Day Schools on such subjects as flint knapping, of which he is a well known expert. Down Farm has also been the site of many annual BBQ's, it is difficult to envisage a better place.

We are blessed with Graham Adams, who is a pilot, enabling us to take many hundreds of aerial photographs, not only of Dorset but also in counties where we went on field trips. He later took over the production of the Newsletter for many years. It is with affection we recall Phil Coles whose poems about the society's activities and members, were a treat to hear and it was very appropriate that his ashes were distributed by an EDAS ceremony on Hambledon Hill Fort. Two of our early members, Haydn Everall and Henry Coles have collected these poems and we look forward to them being produced. Not only poetry but we have a number of skilled artists, Mary Crabtree, now deceased, Anita Hawkins, Pam Norris, Jim Russell and outstandingly with her vast production of illustrations of the societies excavated objects, Janet Bartlet. Quietly tucked away in his home in Shaftsbury is Ted Bestow illustrating and studying the Abby's sculptures, and as a holiday side line making the most amazing models of Roman and Greek monuments. We look with amazement as John Milner paces out 20 m. squares in great accuracy, while less expertly others of us assiduously measure them out, preparatory to field walking. While the Winterbottoms make copies of medieval tiles that can be seen in more than one important ecclesiastical building. We recall Dennis Bicheno, who wrote about Dorset Hill Forts, our first monograph, and Brian Tiller who wrote the first chapter in our first journal (the Geology of East Dorset) and his wife Mary who works in a laboratory and tried to get DNA out of Bronze Age Bones. (Brian was a TV engineer, which we found useful!). Sylvia Church, a librarian whose enthusiasm for archaeology was contagious, was helpful in advising on books, regretfully she is currently unwell and we send her and Roy our best wishes. Roy and Sylvia live at Fifehead Neville, near where we excavated a "magic Well" which became part of a TV programme. Roy took us on a fascinating walk around the parish. We are grateful to Heather Ragget who supplemented our historical research with information from the Public Record Office, and Margaret Roebuck who chaired a group of us in researching the lost villages of the Allen Valley.

Thirty years. Thirty years of fun and learning. Thirty years of digging the past, of walking ancient highways from Cornwall to Scotland. Thirty years of making friends. We must also note the fact that four marriages have taken place between EDAS members, which perhaps gives some indication of the bonds between members. This, with the wealth of skills and interests within the membership and strengths of members recently making up the committee ensures there is no doubt a further thirty successful years ahead of us. It is appropriate that in this thirty year anniversary we are looking at the Batts Bed small finds to bury them for

children to excavate as a learning project organised for the National Trust by our members Gill Broadbent and Alan Hawkins.

Thirty years, from 18 members to nearly two hundred, and of the original group half are still alive and remain members. Some, such as Teresa Hall, Ann Sims, and Haydn Everall have moved away but still keep in touch. We note that Len & Pam Norris & Henry Coles still stagger on with enthusiasm. We recall at this time people like Les Baker, our first Treasurer; Ruth Clipson who organised our first field trip, to Hadrian's Wall and others no longer with us but whose presence in the early days went a long way to make the society what it is today. We note with appreciation that at a later date Phil Roberts became a very active committee member and Barry Perratt give us the advantage of his extensive geological knowledge. Looking back at past members and viewing present members we are struck with the impossibility of reviewing the society without mentioning everyone by name, this of course is not feasible, even if unfair, but once more we emphasise how important everyone has been, and is.

Thirty glorious years, now with the tentacles of age enveloping us, is the time to resign. Resign with sighs of satisfaction as we view the people and activity around us, feeling great pleasure at having been part of such a scene

Andrew said no more than a thousand words. I had wondered if I could ever reach three hundred and would need to apologise to him. Apologise yes, I have reached well over 2000 words and wonder what he is going to edit out! Such is EDAS there is plenty more to go but fear not, I won't.

Finally, to all those starting out in archaeology, when looking for somewhere to dig make sure there is a pub nearby.

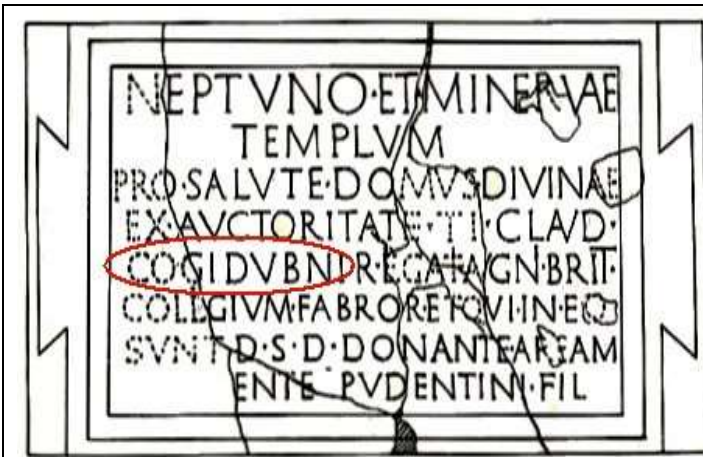
John & Della

EDAS December Lecture: "Were the Romans like us?" with Geoff Taylor.

In December Geoff Taylor, a member of EDAS, gave an enjoyable talk about the Romans and warned us against assuming we had much in common. Geoff started by asking whether we thought Rome used galley slaves. There is little evidence that Rome used slaves in this way, it would be a risk and make them vulnerable in battle. It was a theme introduced by Lew Wallace who wrote Ben Hur and is an example of a "topos" a stock description or literary convention. But who were the Romans? In Britain there were about 40-45,000 Roman soldiers but few would have been Roman citizens. It took 25 years service before soldiers would achieve that status and about half were just auxiliaries. This was a very diverse occupation force most would have come from Gaul and Germania, there were few Italians in the army. There are about 125 Roman epitaphs in Britain referring to people from Gaul, Italy and Germania and a few from Pannonia, Syria, Africa and Greece.

Geoff continued that information about the past comes from a variety of sources; ancient literature, epigraphy (inscriptions in stone) and archaeology. But there is little information surviving in literature and what does survive cannot be relied on. The two main sources about Britain are: "The Gallic Wars" by the self-publicist Julius Caesar and "The Life of Cnaeus Julius Agricola", who had been Governor of Britain and was written by Tacitus who happened to be his son-in-law. As Seneca wrote in 60AD "all historians lie". And with archaeology the evidence still needs to be interpreted. Preconceptions and strong egos can influence interpretations. Geoff warned us about being influenced by the media, especially film, television and historical novels, especially those claiming some historical accuracy. Geoff cited the example of Cleopatra who has been played by Elizabeth Taylor, or even the British alternative Amanda Barrie, but the actual image struck on her coinage shows the real person was far less attractive and was acclaimed not for her looks but for her intellect and personality.

The historical novelist will typically embed a number of solid historical facts then use their imaginations to embellish the story and it is a challenge to see the real from the imagined. In many modern depictions of Rome the ordinary citizen is barely mentioned or even considered, they just got on with their tough lives in the background reduced to more simplistic caricatures such as the greedy banker or dodgy builder. And the world in which they lived will be based on guess work and approximations, usually a total fantasy.



Roman Inscription from Chichester



Amanda Barrie

Geoff then went to consider what the Romans were actually like. Although Rome had been transformed by Augustus after the chaos of the period of four emperors 68-69AD people still lived in very crowded conditions and Rome was very violent by our standards. Augustus set up urban cohorts of about 1500 men to combat mobs and violent gangs and the paramilitary vigilis of about 4000 men who were firemen and a night watch. He reminded us that women weren't even citizens. The empire was designed to preserve the privileges of the elite. There was huge social inequality that became worse with time and over half the population was on the edge of starvation. Violence was a part of life, whether the crucifixion of 6000 slaves along the Appian Way in 71BC after the defeat of the Spartacus revolt or the casual massacre of anybody who resisted conquest and this included every live creature in Carthage in 210BC. And of course we have the coliseum, the recreational choice for the average Roman, where they could enjoy watching indiscriminate slaughter for fun. And as for their personal habits they did not have the same concepts of privacy, which is a modern concept something invented in the 18th or 19th century.



Ostia public toilets



Roman mosaic with slaves

Even the fabled Roman baths were often run down and there is the question of how frequently the water was changed. Examination of human remains suggests that general health was poor with rotten gums and weak teeth, bone degeneration, arthritis and malnutrition. Clothes were expensive and had a real value, so that they would be included in an inheritance and were washed using a mix of ash and urine. It costs money to be buried so the poor were probably just dumped. Infectious disease was the major cause of death and had no respect for wealth. This high mortality resulted in a fragile society almost 50% of all children died before their 5th birthday and half the population were under 20 years of age.

Geoff concluded that the Roman society was very different to ours and that brought different beliefs and attitudes to people, to violence, to cleanliness and death. The way they would think and behave would have been quite different to ours. The Romans were not like us.

We thank Geoff for setting the record straight

Andrew Morgan

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DATE	EDAS EVENTS – 2013
Wed 9th January 2013	EDAS Lecture: The David Johnson Memorial Lecture, with Tim Schadla-Hall
Wed 20th February 2013	EDAS Lecture: Analysis of Hooks Sands and the Swash Channel wreck, with Robert Heaton
Wed 13th March 2013	AGM followed by EDAS Lecture: EDAS and the archaeology of Cranborne Chase, with Martin Green
Wed 10th April 2013	EDAS members evening: i) The 2012 Field Trip to Exmoor, with Alan Hawkins, and ii) Aerial photography over Cranborne Chase, with Jo Crane
Wed 8th May 2013	EDAS Lecture: The strange case of the Dewlish Roman Villa, with Ian Hewitt of Bournemouth University
Thurs 23rd May 2013	EDAS Garden Party: 6.00 to 8.30pm in the Priest House Garden. Tickets available from February 2013.

East Dorset Antiquarian Society

Nomination Form

Nomination for the post of Chairman:

Name of Nominee		Nominee's signature	
Name of Proposer		Proposer's signature	
Name of Secunder		Secunder's signature	

Nomination for a general committee member:

Name of Nominee		Nominee's signature	
Name of Proposer		Proposer's signature	
Name of Secunder		Secunder's signature	

Please return the completed form to Brian Maynard, 7 Verity Crescent, Canford Heath, Poole, BH17 8TH

Contact Telephone Number:

Date: