



Established 1983

## East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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### NEWSLETTER – October 2013

#### EDAS Lecture - Stonehenge New Discoveries, with Mike Parker Pearson

We have a handful of tickets left for this prestigious event that will be held on 13<sup>th</sup> November in the East Dorset Chambers at Furzehill. There is NO charge for members but the usual £2 charge for guests. **Tickets will be available at the next meeting**, on 9<sup>th</sup> October. Lilian Ladle is handling the distribution.

#### EDAS Lecture - Bouldner Cliff Project, with Lauren Tidbury of the Maritime Archaeology Trust

On September 11<sup>th</sup> we enjoyed the first lecture of the new EDAS Programme. First Lauren explained that the Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology is no more and has been renamed - The Maritime Archaeology Trust. Originally their core activities were focused around Hampshire and the Isle of Wight but they have extended their horizons and now work in other parts of the UK and on international projects such as in Belgium and Qatar. It is a charitable trust that researches and excavates maritime archaeology and heritage.

The origins of the group can be traced back to 1969 with the discovery of the wreck of HMS *Pomone* at The Needles when the local council funded a team to research and excavate the site. Over the years a number of other local wrecks have been investigated.

In 1999 divers from the trust discovered the Mesolithic settlement site of Bouldnor Cliff, offshore of the Isle of Wight and about 11 metres below the surface of the Solent. Attention was first drawn to the site when divers observed a lobster discarding worked flint tools from its burrow.



Since then, regular fieldwork has revealed that Bouldnor was a settlement dating from approximately 8,000 years ago (6,000 BC), at a time when lower sea levels meant that the Solent was an extensive river valley and there was a chalk ridge stretching from the Purbeck Hills to the Isle of Wight. Lauren explained that the site has been dated using radiocarbon dating after attempts using dendrochronology techniques failed – they couldn't find a match of the tree ring patterns. There is a great deal of organic material available, including beautifully preserved leaves of oak trees that are 8,000 years old. The site has also proffered the oldest known example of cord found in the UK. The team have discovered that the site was on the edge of a fresh water lagoon, and that there are areas where specialised tasks were undertaken over an extended period, such as boat building and tool making. They have found that the technology used by these Mesolithic settlers was probably 2,000 years ahead of what had previously been believed. The site shows that the transition from fresh water to sea water occurred quite rapidly, certainly within a generation.

Lauren explained that underwater archaeology faces several challenges, such as visibility and strong currents, and the team have to insert supports to hold so they can remain over the site. Some scuba archaeologists used to working in the Mediterranean have been unable to cope with the particular conditions of the Solent.

A particular frustration is that legislation that can be applied to land based sites of archaeological interest does not apply to marine sites. Local fishermen are causing much damage through their destructive dredging practises. The Trust has investigated two Centaur tanks from a capsized Landing Craft Tank in the Solent, as part of a case study to see if land based legislation can be used to protect maritime archaeology, so far to no avail.

The Trust runs an active outreach and schools programme and operates a "Maritime Bus" to make maritime archaeology more accessible to the general public. The bus attends regular events in the south coast, including school, community and other public events.

You can get more information about the trust via their web-site: <http://www.maritimearchaeologytrust.org/> and follow them via facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/maritimearchaeologytrust>

We thanked Lauren for her talk and for handling a barrage of questions afterwards, and wished her good luck for the future.

**Andrew Morgan**

## Archaeology Report -Druce Farm Roman Villa

The site has been carefully put under wraps for the winter, using layers of terram, soil and stone. We are planning another season of excavation next year and have some ambitious plans. Over the season we had approximately 30 EDAS members on site, aswell as enthusiastic representatives from other groups and hope for a larger turn out next year. So all you budding archaeologists make sure you come out and get your hands dirty, there are a variety of tasks to suit everybody.



The post excavation work is progressing well. Reports on the site will appear: the Association for Roman Archaeology Newsletter ( website: <http://www.associationromanarchaeology.org/newnewsletter.htm> ) and the Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society. It has also been suggested, because of its importance, that an article should be prepared for the academic Roman Journal 'Britannia'.

As you know we have made a submission for the biennial Dorset Archaeological Award which will be announced on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October..... and remember it's the participation that counts.

**Andrew Morgan**

### **\*\*\*WANTED-NEWSLETTER ARTICLES\*\*\***

This is a request to members to submit an article about something they have been involved in that has an archaeological or historical content. If you have been working on a project, attended an event or visited an exhibition then share it with your fellow members. The piece can be a short recommendation or a 1000 word article with pictures....but if it's interesting to you then I'm sure it will be of interest to others.

#### **Hands on with artefacts - Decanting the archaeology galleries at Salisbury museum.**

Any visitor to Salisbury museum will know that the existing archaeology galleries are now completely empty as refurbishment work is starting this autumn to create a brand new archaeology area. Imagine a massive spring clean – a chance to take stock and update records. Over a four month period, cabinets were being carefully emptied; and thousands of items were measured and then checked off against, or added to, the current collections database before being wrapped and put into storage.

Working on the Wednesday “shift”, we can proudly proclaim we have now handled more objects than Jane Ellis-Schon, the Project Curator at Salisbury Museum! We handled, recorded and wrapped hundreds of artefacts ranging from obsidian-tipped spears and glass arrowheads – parts of the Pitts-Rivers ethnographic collection – through Iron Age tools and pots and glass beads – to Roman jewellery and a beautiful stone head of a Roman lady. Our highlight was to help move the Amesbury Archer to his new home in storage before he was sent off for conservation.



A degree of lateral thinking was required and the museum staff gave us many challenges. For example, we pioneered a very innovative method for packing spears using poster tubes and acid-free tissue paper. Wrapping Christmas presents will never be the same again!

Of course, it's not all glamour ... lowlights include unscrewing heavy agricultural implements dating from the 19th century and “handling” the Walkers crisp packet and coke can from the top layer of the Stonehenge gallery stratigraphy display. Fortunately, these last two items were disposed of, rather than lovingly recorded and packed.

It's been a perfect opportunity for us, as volunteers, to increase our knowledge, learn to recognise a wider variety of objects and examine pottery fabrics close-up. And it's a great privilege to handle objects collected by Lt.-General Pitt Rivers himself. We've come to appreciate the timelessness of many designs. It's amazing how bracelets, brooches and rings or artefacts such as toiletry sets have hardly changed from the Bronze Age or Roman times to the present day. Such objects demonstrate highly sophisticated workmanship using hands and basic tools. Modern equivalents have scarcely improved in design or functionality.

Now the decanting is over, we're onto our next project: artefact photography. Having mastered the camera, we are now helping to create a visual record of the archaeology collections which will form part of Salisbury Museum's on-line research database in the future.

*Vanessa Joseph and Sara Marshall*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DATE	EDAS EVENTS – 2013
<b>9th October 2013</b>	<b>EDAS Lecture –What's so fascinating about watermills?</b> with Peter Lightfoot
<b>13th November 2013</b>	<b>EDAS Lecture – Stonehenge, New Discoveries,</b> with Professor Mike Parker Pearson, UCL Institute of Archaeology. <b>NB: this event will take place at the East Dorset Council Chambers, Furzehill</b>
<b>11th December 2013</b>	<b>EDAS Lecture – Isaac Gulliver Dorset Smuggler,</b> with Malcolm Angel
DATE	EDAS EVENTS – 2014
<b>8th January 2014</b>	<b>EDAS Lecture –Pre-Columbian Mayan Culture,</b> with Neil Meldrum, EDAS Member
<b>12th February 2014</b>	<b>EDAS Lecture – Burial Mounds and Battletanks, Archaeology of MOD estates,</b> with Martin Brown
<b>12th March 2014</b>	<b>EDAS AGM and Lecture – Hod Hill,</b> with Dave Stewart, EDAS Member
<b>9th April 2014</b>	<b>EDAS Lecture – Egyptians and other Travelling People in Early Modern Dorset,</b> with Judy Ford
<b>14th May 2014</b>	<b>EDAS Lecture – Kingston Lacy, an undiscovered history,</b> with David Smith, National Trust

## EDAS 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Essays

*This month's essay is by Martin Papworth a longstanding friend of the society. He recalls his first steps as a paid archaeologist and his long association with the ever enthusiastic members of EDAS, who worked with him on several excavations exploring the Kingston Lacy landscape.*

### **EDAS, the National Trust and the Kingston Lacy Estate. Partners in grime.**

Back in 1986, as an out of work archaeologist looking for his first permanent job, I was given the opportunity to meet the National Trust's Head of Archaeology at Corfe Castle ticket office.

With David Thackray that day was Nancy Grace who had also been summoned for interview. David saw some potential in us and gave us a 4 week contract to supervise groups of volunteers on a working holiday.

Since that time, we have worked with lots of people of all ages and backgrounds who want to get a taste of archaeology. For some, it has been a great experience and been the first step in a career in working with the past. For others, it was an experience, something they tried but not really an all-consuming passion.

After Corfe, I was given the task of auditing the archaeological conservation needs of the Kingston Lacy and Corfe Castle Estates. I was allowed 10 weeks to do this but it took rather longer. There was so much to discover across the parkland and fields of Kingston Lacy. Some of our greatest allies in this research have been members of the East Dorset Antiquarian Society.

I remember John telling me that they chose the emblem of Badbury for the Society because of its founding excavation. This was in 1982 (the year NT acquired the estate), when David Johnston led a field school investigating the Roman road crossroads north of Badbury. Therefore, the Kingston Lacy Estate is home territory for EDAS.

We first met John and Della in 1988, when we investigated a site near Badbury. A map dated 1774, labelled a ploughed down earthwork as a Roman amphitheatre. The farmer thought it was a WWII bomb crater. We were given permission to dig two trenches across its bank and ditches and needed help. David Smith, KL's Head Warden, suggested we contact Priest's House Museum and the curator found us members of EDAS and the Wimborne Archaeological Group to help us. During the excavation, we uncovered some Roman pottery and a coin in the fill of the outer ditch but below this was earlier material. We had discovered a Late Bronze Age enclosure. The land was taken out of the plough and the earthwork is now under permanent pasture.

It was the start of something special, and over the years EDAS members continued to investigate the Kingston Lacy landscape with us. Our next task was to excavate areas where aerial photographs showed archaeological sites. These would be damaged by the planting of a new beech avenue that would eventually grow to replace the old avenue created in 1835. During the winter of 1989, we dug various sites, including a 25m diameter ring ditch and a series of linear boundaries. One was a steep 'V'-shaped ditch over 3m deep. There was a lot to do as the beech avenue is about 5km long. The help of EDAS members was very much appreciated.

In 1990, the Crab Farm Romano-British settlement was identified and subsequent fieldwalking and geophysical survey revealed something of its extent and complexity beneath the arable fields. We had some basic questions about the place that could only be answered by excavation.

What was continued ploughing doing to the buried archaeology? Which came first the Dorchester Roman road or the Roman fort? How old was the fort and was there an Iron Age site beneath it? This led to excavations in 1991, 1995 and 2004 assisted by EDAS. Some good memories are Marian in 95 finding a complete black burnished pot in the oven she was excavating and holding it gently but triumphantly cradled in her hands. Another was when Mike and Anita worked together in 2004 and got further and further apart. Anita excavated a boundary ditch and found a brooch that was our best dating evidence to prove that the settlement boundaries dated to the Late Iron Age. Mike dug a pit that seemed bottomless and at 3m we

were forced to conclude it was a well. It was full of 4<sup>th</sup> century coins and pottery but lay under the Roman road to Dorchester.



*Mike in his Roman well and Anita in the Iron Age boundary ditch Crab Farm 2004*

Probably the key place we worked on was Badbury Rings itself. There had been no archaeological digs there in the past and therefore we had no dating evidence to help us understand the development of the site. The 2004 -5 site log lists over 30 EDAS members who got involved with the investigation of the society's emblem. The excavation uncovered the remains of two Iron Age round houses, identified a Late Mesolithic to Early Neolithic occupation site on the top of the hill and also revealed that Badbury was reused in the sub-Roman period. Radiocarbon dates from charcoal found on a chalk floor dated to the period AD480-520.

I think that one of the important elements of archaeology is that the past is a vast subject and involves everyone's experience. EDAS includes members from many backgrounds. One lesson that every 'professional' archaeologist should learn early on is to rely on the experience of others when interpreting the story of a site. For example, someone in the building profession is likely to understand construction evidence better than the archaeologist who is recording it (Tim taught us that)..and that goes for a range of evidence which may at first sight be incomprehensible.

Geoff, as an OS surveyor, used his mapping knowledge and learned the use of the geophysical survey equipment and produced stunning plots of the Crab Farm settlement and the royal medieval manor house at Kingston Lacy. Dave has continued his work and gone on to survey sites like the Barford medieval settlement and further afield.. his survey of Hod Hill is massive and rather amazing.

I tend to concentrate on the archaeology but of course it is getting to know people which is particularly rewarding and Nancy is particularly good at that. For example, Alan and Gill who over the years have worked at Kingston Lacy but more recently at Brownsea, monitoring the coastal erosion to the industrial archaeology along the coast or Danae and her documentary studies of Kingston Lacy's medieval records.

My job now takes me increasingly away from Dorset and the Kingston Lacy and Corfe Castle Estates but Nancy and I continue to value the experience we have gained when working with volunteers there. Most recently we have completed a research excavation at Chedworth Roman Villa, Gloucestershire. The work included a group of Birmingham University archaeology students, staff members who fancied trying archaeology for the first time, volunteers from local societies and particularly keen visitors. Many were happy to sit on the wall tops and ask us questions as we uncovered the buried bath house. One little boy arrived breathlessly with his tools wrapped in a cloth bag as we began to backfill the site. We found him a place and George, one of the students, sat beside him and showed him what to do. The little boy was so inspired that George said working with him had been a great experience.

That's my conclusion. Archaeology is not everyone's thing but in that moment when you see that glint in the eye of a fellow devotee, it's a great thing, to provide the opportunity to work together, to find new things about the past and share a mutual passion.



*EDAS toasting the excavation on Badbury Rings*

***Martin Papworth***