



Established 1983

## East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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### NEWSLETTER – January 2014

#### Happy New Year

Welcome back and we hope everyone has survived the natural and self inflicted challenges of the festive season. Through the winter the Committee has been busy, even booking a speaker for 2015, for which we should thank Steve and Peter. Lilian and I have held several meetings with Jon Murden and his team at Dorset County Museum: covering, deposition in the County Archive of archaeological material from the Worth Matravers and Druce Farm Roman Villa excavations; publication of reports on these sites and the Minchington Roman Villa; an initiative to encourage children from Dorset schools to experience archaeology in the field. For the moment, discussions with Emma Ayling of the Priest House Museum are on hold due to their recent re-organisation. We hope also to arrange some activities with the Ancient Technology Centre in Cranborne. We are taking the opportunity to look at our Constitution, and we must thank Geoff Taylor for some sterling work converting it into plain English. Don't forget to provide articles for the Newsletter, we would like to read about members antiquarian activities and thanks to Keith for this month's contribution.

#### EDAS Lecture – Isaac Gulliver Dorset Smuggler, with Malcolm Angel

The December Lecture by Malcolm Angel, proprietor of Gulliver's Bookshop, ex-mayor of Wimborne and author, who presented the notorious smuggler Isaac Gulliver as a lovable rogue, an 18th century entrepreneur who climbed the well-worn ladder from criminality to respectability and the establishment .

Malcolm explained that Gulliver was a Wiltshire man, born in Semington near Trowbridge in 1745. His father, of the same name, died in 1755 aged 52 years, and was buried in the local St George's Church. He found a reference to Gulliver at the age of 14 years old when he was arrested at Bitman's Chine (now Canford Cliffs Chine) in possession of smuggled goods. At the age of 23 years Gulliver made a smart business decision when he married Elizabeth Beale at Six Penny Handley. She was born at the Blacksmith's Arms at Thorney Down, a well-known smugglers haunt. From the marriage certificate Malcolm concluded that both could write and found that her father William Beale was well connected, jointly responsible for the Poor Book in Chettle with a W. Chaffing, who was a reverend, magistrate and friend of the influential Sterte family.

This was a time of major changes for rural communities. There was the introduction of mechanisation, reducing the need for manual workers and large scale enclosure of common land, when wealthy landowners proceeded to annex vast acreages of land that had been available for use by rural families. Entire communities became destitute and were desperate to supplement their meagre earnings by supporting the illegal contraband trade. At the same time the relationship between Britain and France deteriorated and a trade embargo created a premium on luxury goods from the Continent. And those that could be landed legally were heavily taxed. This created a massive demand from wealthy customers and Gulliver took full advantage of this opportunity.

He created a very effective business, employing hundreds of people; some wore powdered wigs and were called the White Whigs. At its height he ran 15 luggers (very fast coastal vessels that eventually became

racing sloops, many of which were built in Poole Harbour), bringing gin, silk, lace and tea to Poole Bay from the Continent. The smuggling of goods from across the channel was at its peak in this period, and Dorset's coastline, with its wooded creeks around the Bournemouth area and wide sweeps of deserted beaches, made it ideal for landing smuggled goods. Behind the coast running for many miles inland, the wild Dorset heathland- was the smugglers route to the towns, hamlets, farms and manor houses beyond. He developed a network of hiding places used during the daytime, such as the St Andrew's church, Kinson which is reputed to have a warren of tunnels beneath as well as rope cut marks caused by hauling goods into the church.

Malcolm explained that men involved in smuggling were sometimes referred to as Moonrakers. Apparently they sometimes hid barrels in ponds and when retrieving the contraband their behaviour would be explained as that of fools trying to rake the reflection of the moon. On the revenue side local men were employed as riding officers, referred to as Rideouts, their thankless job was to monitor their area and inform Officers of the Custom of any illegal activity.

In 1782 Gulliver was caught in possession of four pipes of wine. This just demonstrates the size of his trade since a pipe is a cask having a capacity of 126 gallons or 2 hogsheads (478 litres). Luckily he benefitted from the King's pardon and bought his freedom paying a fine of £5000. He supposedly stopped smuggling and became a legitimate wine importer. But by the age of 43 years he was referred to in a report from the Custom House, Poole, to His Majesty's Commissioners of Customs in London [1788] when it is mentioned that Gulliver was considered one of the greatest and most notorious smugglers in the west of England. He became known as the "King of the Dorset Smugglers"; he was also referred to as "the gentle smuggler who never killed a man".

However, Gulliver did become a respected citizen, a gentleman and banker. He wisely invested the large proceeds of his smuggling activities, particularly in property, much of which was used for further smuggling activities. These included properties at Howe Lodge, Kinson, and Gulliver's Farm, West Moors, both close to the principal cart-route inland from the beach. On the foothills of Cranborne Chase, as well as Thorney Down, he owned Thickthorn Farm, Long Cichel, and nearby North-East Farm. He also used the beaches of Burton Bradstock to unload his contraband and bought a North Eggardon Farm, Askerswell at the foot of Eggardon Hill.

He retired to Gulliver's House, West Borough, Wimborne and died there on Friday 13 September 1822, leaving an estate of £60,000. This included properties across Hampshire, Wiltshire and Somerset as well as Dorset, which would be worth many millions today. He is buried in the floor of Wimborne Minster, in an upright position – due to space considerations.

He had three children, Elizabeth, Ann and Isaac. Elizabeth married William Fryer a banker and shipper and their child, Isaac's granddaughter, married into the Castleman banking family. Their bank became the National Provincial Bank of England and eventually was part of National Westminster Bank, which in turn became part of the Royal Bank of Scotland, which suffered the ignominy of Fred the Shred's cavalier business acumen. Ann lived in Westover Villas, Bournemouth and paid for the establishment of Bournemouth Gardens. His descendants include Sir Frederick Fryer, Lt Gen Sir John Fryer and the banker Edward Castleman, owner of Chettle House.



*A miniature of Isaac Gulliver painted in 1821 and preserved in Chettle House by his descendants.*

There is no doubt that smugglers such as Gulliver played an important role in society at this time. Their large trade in cut-price black market goods made them an important supplier to the wealthy members of society and they provided payments to a large number of suppliers and employment for the hundreds of people he needed to run his illicit business.

Many members said how much they enjoyed the talk and we thanked Malcolm for enlightening us about a local lad made good.

Although Malcolm was too polite to mention it, he has written a very well researched book entitled: **In Search of Isaac Gulliver** priced £12.99 ISBN 9780956071507, which should be available in all good bookshops.

**Andrew Morgan**

## **Study Day at Southampton University: Human Origins**

Four EDAS members were fortunate to be able to attend the recent study day organised by the Lifelong Learning team at Southampton University. Five speakers covered the following diverse range of topics: Dr. William Davies (Networks and novelties: how to recognise innovations in the Old Stone Age); Dr. John McNabb (Skulls, stones and science: how we reconstruct human evolution); Dr. James Cole (Imagination and identity in the Palaeolithic : accessing hominin cognition through material culture); Dr. Rebecca Farbstein (Firing up art in the Ice Age: the repeated invention of ceramic technologies for artistic purposes); Dr. Alistair Pike (Did Neanderthals paint? The earliest cave art and the origins of human symbolic behaviour)

Ranging through the Palaeolithic - an unimaginably vast period of time – they gave an inspiring insight into this most ephemeral area of research with its fragmentary and fractured lineage of fossils and artefacts. The evidence is tantalising, particularly concerning possible cultures and how ideas and techniques, innovations and concepts may have been adopted and dispersed through widely spread groups.

We have to thank the speakers for the clarity of their talks that stimulated our imaginations, bringing us up to date with the latest ideas and thinking in this most fascinating and intangible period of humanity's existence.

### **How Grumpy Old Men Saved Humanity**

All the best theories start with a stimulating conversation and a good lunch. The four venerable stalwarts of EDAS adjourned for a pleasant lunch following the first three stimulating lectures on Human Origins. The conversation ranged far and wide as we pondered how ideas and innovations may have spread through what must eventually have been widely spread groups in a tiny total population of hominids. Conversation ranged through self-limiting group size – grooming cliques in non-human hominids whose size appears to depend on the size of the neocortex, up to Dunbar's number of c.150 for homo sapiens, and the idea of memes first proposed by Richard Dawkins. During this conversation the writer had a light bulb moment. Picture if you can our ancient ancestors sitting around chewing the cud after a satisfying meal, when a youngster pipes up: "Look at this, it's a better way to make a hand axe/ spear/etc etc.....", causing all the tribal elders to mither and grizzle amongst themselves about young upstarts eventually causing the youngsters to leave taking their new ideas and skills with them. Thus we have the core driving force behind the dispersal, evolution and adoption of new ideas.

Good theories should make predictions. The ancient hominid sites need to be re-examined to look for those as yet unrecognised Palaeolithic soap boxes that our grumpy ancestors could get on to fulminate against any new-fangled ideas or proposals for change. (I'm sure there's a doctoral thesis lurking here!)

**Keith Allsopp**

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

| DATE                            | EDAS EVENTS – 2014  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>8th January<br/>2014</b>     | <b>EDAS Lecture –Pre-Columbian Mayan Culture</b> , with Neil Meldrum, EDAS Member   |
| <b>12th February<br/>2014</b>   | <b>EDAS Lecture – Burial Mounds and Battletanks, Archaeology of MOD estates</b> , with Martin Brown   |
| <b>12th March<br/>2014</b>      | <b>EDAS AGM and Lecture – Hod Hill</b> , with Dave Stewart, EDAS Member   |
| <b>9th April<br/>2014</b>       | <b>EDAS Lecture – Egyptians and other Travelling People in Early Modern Dorset</b> , with Judy Ford   |
| <b>14th May<br/>2014</b>        | <b>EDAS Lecture – Kingston Lacy, an undiscovered history, with David Smith, National Trust</b>  |
| <b>7th - 13th June<br/>2014</b> | <b>EDAS Field Trip – Lincolnshire</b> – Details are being finalised. If you are interested please contact Brian Maynard at the next meeting or email on; <a href="mailto:brian.retired@ntlworld.com">brian.retired@ntlworld.com</a> |