



Established 1983

East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER –April 2014

Membership Renewal Reminder

For those members who need to renew their annual membership a form is attached to this newsletter.

Thank You

EDAS Lecture – Hod Hill with Dave Stewart

At last month's meeting I was delighted when we had to put out a number of additional chairs, concluding that we had so many conscientious members keen to attend our Annual General Meeting. Then a member pointed out that the audience was due to the lecture by our esteemed colleague and EDAS committee member Dave Stewart. From the enthusiastic praise he received on completion I can assure you he met everyone's expectations.

Dave explained that Hod Hill lies on the chalk hills just 5 kms NW of Blandford. It is a large Iron Age hill fort covering 55 hectares/ 22 acres. It is unique because for 10 years it was occupied by a group of illegal immigrants, usually referred to as the Roman Army, who built an encampment in the northwest corner. The origin of the name Hod is not really understood, but is possibly derived after an old British God called Nodons (or Lludd in the Brythonic language), who is best known from a temple near Lydney. Dave explained that the alternative name for the Roman Camp on Hod Hill is Lydsbury. So was there a temple to Lludd on Hod Hill?

For nearly 1800 years the hill remained at peace under pasture, until 1857 when soaring grain prices caused the landowner to plough the western half, including the Roman Fort area. Henry Durden, a local grocer/antiquarian, created a museum above his shop, collecting artefacts from the vicinity, often paying locals for random pieces. Thereafter ploughing continued, almost continuously, up to and just after World War II; eventually only the south east corner remaining untouched. Over the last 50 years, the site has reverted to pasture and is now managed by the National Trust.

Heywood Sumner lamented in 1913 that the site had been "... too much wasted by cultivation for definite survey". An aerial photograph taken in 1924 by OS Crawford shows hollows of hut platforms and tracks still visible on the unploughed area. A limited excavation was undertaken in 1949 in preparation for the major study led by Sir Ian Richmond in the fifties. He excavated the ramparts, the Roman Camp and also a structure that he recognised as a substantial enclosed round house. Here he found a number of iron ballista bolts, and eagerly concluded this was evidence of a surgical strike by the Roman army on the Chieftain's hut.

More recently the National Trust was keen to understand what evidence remained under the ploughed area. As part of his undergraduate studies Dave agreed to undertake a geophysical survey, using different types of technology, over an area of 80m x 160m. And so Dave began the first phase of his project which was to last five months during 2005 and 2006. Because Dave is a dogged character he eventually surveyed the whole area comprising 750 grids, each 20m x 20m, often covering the same area more than once. He used a variety of equipment including: magnetometry with a fluxgate gradiometer to search for cut features and burning; twin-probe resistivity device best showed cut features and walls; whilst magnetic susceptibility with a field coil was used to identify spreads of burning and trampling; and he utilised electromagnetics equipment that takes two sets of readings – one that equates to magnetic susceptibility and one that

records resistivity. On occasion he was able to use Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) which cuts through the flint and chalk rubble within the plough soil, revealing traces of structures that survey at depths up to 80 cms. Dave admitted that he would like to undertake a complete survey of the site using GPR but hawthorn, briar and bramble is invading the site making radar survey virtually impossible.

Nevertheless the results have been spectacular and he has proved that features can still be detected under the plough soil, detecting signs of intensive occupation across the whole area. He has found several enclosed huts, possibly suggesting that the hill fort was used by several leaders of local tribes/clans. A dendritic system of trackways can be clearly seen from the Steepleton Gate at the northeast. The main trackway leads towards the corner of the Roman fort. Hut platforms beside the track have no ring-ditches and many have more than one hearth or pit, which led Boyd-Dawkins to describe them as cooking huts. Some smaller tracks to lead towards quarry pits along the perimeter of the fort which are interpreted as industrial areas. He has found an anomaly on the northern edge, which is caused by quantities of dense slag and hammerscale, suggesting it to be the site of a smithy. Alignments of groups of 4/5 post holes have been found in several places which Dave suggested could represent buildings used for commercial purposes rather than simple storage. Some of the round house ring ditches are joined, presumably as an elementary drainage system. Within the Roman Fort area Dave has a number of features that require further investigation. Across the *via praetoria* there is a round feature which Richmond decided was a Bronze Age barrow, but Dave has detected a prominent iron spike and suspects it may be an Iron Age round house. The response from the area containing the barrack block suggests that it burned down, iron spikes around the periphery of the fort suggest the presence of towers and defence structures.

I think the audience was suitably impressed by the scale of the task Dave had completed. It was a tough demanding job, requiring meticulous planning and execution. It takes a big effort to push a wheelbarrow load of equipment up to the top of the hill, then stake out the grids before doing the survey, length by length. Then the data has to be downloaded onto a computer and the alchemist's skill required for its interpretation. Dave mentioned that on occasion he received conflicting advice, for instance the direction he should perform the survey, which resulted in him having to repeat some of the work – only to find that the results remained the same!! But rest assured he bears no grudge.



Fig-1: Aerial Photo showing Hod Hill Iron Age Fort with Roman Encampment and the Great Bournes field

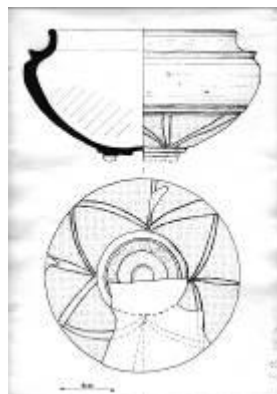


Fig-2: Drawing of Dave's favourite Roman bowl by Janet Bartlet

What is obvious is that Dave's epic work is not complete. He has created a survey of the site showing a huge number of features under the ground but many can only be partially interpreted. He would like to dig a handful of trenches and investigate further, but at the moment the National Trust has no appetite for excavation.

Not able to leave a job half completed, and having mastered the heights, Dave came down the hill to explore the surrounding landscape. OS Crawford wrote that he had recognised many signs of habitation beneath the hill, especially to the north. Norman Field had referred to a Roman Road, crossing the river Iwerne at Lazerton Farm, then supposedly leading up to the Roman Gate through the ramparts. In 1986 Norman led an excavation with EDAS members to excavate the Lazerton Farm site. The first edition Ordnance Survey map also features a Roman Villa, discovered in 1860, and located in the field named Great Bournes. After undertaking an extensive geophysical survey Dave has not been able to detect either, but he

remains intrigued by the faintest suggestion of a square building and some linear features on the western edge. With support from the local landowner Dave worked his way through to the field named Big Ground. Here Dave did find many features, including enclosure ditches and pits signifying habitation over an area of about 15 acres. He was delighted when he was given permission to dig eight trenches in the maize field; to ground-truth the geophysics and get dating evidence.

The first trench revealed a recut ditch containing Roman limestone roof tiles and poorly fired pottery, believed to be much earlier. Behind it was a late Iron Age pit with pottery and many lumps of chalk which showed wattle marks. The next trench was over an anomaly that turned out to be two Bronze Age pits, located next to an Iron Age beehive pit. Moving a couple of metres to locate a suspected roundhouse he found a Romano-British cobbled surface, lying over an Iron Age ditch. The site was proving to be extremely complex. It has been occupied over a period exceeding 2000 years leaving many overlapping and interwoven features. Further trenches revealed Romano-British and Iron Age ditches, and another cobbled surface. Slots across the long linear features show that one is early Iron Age, while another could be either the ploughed out remains of a medieval lynchet or it possibly a road made of packed chalk. Dave worked with Ken Wheatley, and they scanned the ploughsoil with a metal detector. In amongst the rubbish, he found buckles and buttons, several Roman coins and a stunning Iron Age bronze stater.

In 2009 Dave was joined by a few EDAS members to expose a wider area opening up five trenches. The features are difficult to interpret due to the local chalk geology but the preservation of artefacts is great. The trenches produced the same range of Iron Age dates and also a Romano-British midden dated by 4th century coins. Prehistoric pits and ditches of various periods were sampled including three Iron Age beehive pits over 2m deep.

The site has produced over 3000 pieces of pottery; several items have been drawn by Janet Bartlet (see Fig-2). From the large quantity of animal bone Dave has deduced that a mixed farming strategy was carried out at Stourpaine throughout the period. Cattle, sheep and pigs are all represented with sheep gaining importance in the later Iron Age. Horses form about 10% of the bone remains in the prehistoric periods, dropping in the Romano-British to half that figure, possibly because the Romans took the rest. Dave found that all the horses were mature, suggesting that the old and the lame were selected for slaughter. Pathology on the rear legs of cattle show that these animals were originally used for traction and only in the Romano-British period is there evidence of their primary use for meat. The number of horses and the presence of chickens – very rare in the Iron Age – suggest that this was a rich site, but its relationship with the hill fort is still unclear.

The following year Dave started in another part of the settlement a bit further up the hill but soon returned to Great Bournes to sample some of the possible pits at the southern end. The first one was clearly Roman and demonstrated a rich diet with over 1000 oyster shells, bones of fish, game and poultry, and lots of late Romano-British style pottery and small interesting finds. Do these point to the lost villa? A second pit also had Romano-British pottery in the upper layer but thereafter everything appeared to be Early Bronze Age. At the base was a quarter of a human – the left hand side of the torso, humerus and part of the femur. There was more animal bone in a late Romano-British pit lined with roof tiles and capped with red and green, heathstone and greensand.

By the end the audience probably felt exhausted but totally impressed by the work Dave has put into this major project. He easily coped with an array of questions from the floor, although he could not be drawn on the intriguing relationship with nearby Hambledon Hill. This article can only provide an overview of a very detailed talk, if people want any more information Dave has submitted a series of papers about the site that have been published in the annual DNHAS Proceedings. I thank Dave for providing me with his detailed notes. A couple of comments from members who live in the Blandford area suggest that Dave has become part of local folklore – “The man on Lludd Hill”!

Andrew Morgan

Archaeology Reports

Druce Farm Roman Villa Excavation

The site will be prepared and available for excavation to recommence on Tuesday 6th May. Several members have asked for the opportunity to work on weekends and we have scheduled four weekends. Below are some key dates that we have diarised:

DATES	ACTIVITIES
May 6 th	Site opens
May 31 st / June 1 st	Weekend Working
June 28 th and 29 th	Weekend Working
June 29 th	Open Day
July 19 th / 20 th	Weekend Working
July 19 th	CBA Archaeology Day
July 26 th / 27 th	Weekend Working

Normally the site will be open from Monday to Friday, but to accommodate weekend opportunities the site will be closed for two weekdays on the following week.

One exciting development is that we have been working closely with Dorset County Museum and we are making the site available for school visits, which normally will occur on Tuesdays. We ensured that several secondary schools from East Dorset have been contacted. Sue Cullinane has been appointed our Education Officer.

There is a great deal of work to be undertaken this year and there are opportunities for people whatever their level of experience. If you are interested then please contact:

Lilian Ladle, Site Director, email: bestwall@tiscali.co.uk or tel: 012929553144

WANTED

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

This is a request to members to submit an article about something they have been involved with 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. It could even be a book review. 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 other members.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DATE	EDAS EVENTS – 2014
9th April 2014	EDAS Lecture – Egyptians and other Travelling People in Early Modern Dorset, with Judy Ford
26th April 2014	EDAS Walk – Exploring West Parley with John Cullen, for further details please contact John on 01202 582662 or email him at johncullen50@hotmail.com
6th May 2014	EDAS Druce Farm Roman Villa Project – the end date will be decided according to progress but undoubtedly we will continue through to September.
14th May 2014	EDAS Lecture – Kingston Lacy, an undiscovered history, with David Smith, National Trust
17 th May 2014	EDAS Walk – Pamphill Environs with David Smith. If you want further details please contact Peter Walker on 01425 471326 or email him at peter@peterwalker.info
18 th June 2104	EDAS Walk – Tarrant Rushton Airfield-1 : walk led by Pete Scriven, for further details please contact Pete on 01202 885012 or email him at peteas@talktalk.net
28th June 2104	EDAS Walk – Tarrant Rushton Airfield-2 : slightly longer version of 18 th June walk led by Pete Scriven, for further details please contact Pete on 01202 885012 or email him at peteas@talktalk.net

Note: unless otherwise stated all lectures start at 7.30pm and are held at **St Catherine's Church Hall, Lewens Lane, Wimborne, BH21 1LE.**

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The membership fee is due on 1 April no matter what time of year you joined. Those members who pay by standing order or who joined this year can ignore the remainder of this note.

Please pay your fee to me either at the next meeting or send your cheque (not cash) by post to me together with the attached renewal form. If you want to pay by standing order please let me know and I will send a form to you.

Helen Brickell

EAST DORSET ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM 2014

Please highlight any change of details otherwise leave blank

Surname/Forenames

Address and Postcode

.....

Telephone No. E-Mail.....

Individual £8.50, Family £12, Student £5

Cheques payable to: EAST DORSET ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Please return form with cheque to:

Helen Brickell, Membership Secretary, 48, Lytchett Drive, Poole, Dorset, BH18 9LB

or email: hmbrickell@googlemail.com or Tel: 01202 602753 for a standing order form

Name\s in block letters.....

Signed