



Established 1983

East Dorset Antiquarian Society

www.dorset-archaeology.org.uk

mail@dorset-archaeology.org.uk

Edited by: Andrew Morgan, email: andrewmorgz@aol.com , tel: 01202 731162

NEWSLETTER – Mid Summer 2014

Druce Farm Roman Villa Excavation

CBA Open Day - 19th July

Our second Open Day is part of the CBA National Archaeology Week and we hope that many EDAS members will take the opportunity to visit. In June we held the first Open Day and nearly 300 people from all over Dorset and beyond visited the site, many volunteered their delight in the Roman Villa and the work done by the team. See below for more information about the excavation. and

Check the EDAS website for further details.

EDAS Lecture – – Kingston Lacy, an undiscovered history, with David Smith, National Trust

We thought we were quite familiar with Kingston Lacy, the fine estate bequeathed to the National Trust by Henry Ralph Bankes, but we were in for an intriguing surprise when David Smith gave the final lecture of the 2013-2014 programme. He explained that when the NT became custodians of the house they discovered a treasure horde of precious manuscripts. They include Anglo-Saxon charters from the time of King Ine of the 8th century and many manorial rolls detailing estate business over hundreds of years. They had been surprisingly well preserved and offer an insight into the minutiae of medieval life of everyone associated with the estate, from the titled through to the humblest peasant.

David explained that the estate has had a royal connection since Saxon times when it was established by King Ine in early 8th century as a royal estate referred to as “cyninges tun”. The earliest reference is found in the Anglo Saxon chronicles of 871. David explained that there are substantial earthworks to the south west of the existing house, in Abbott Street Copse, and he suggested that this is the likely site of a great Saxon house and settlement. He is frustrated that no archaeological excavation has yet been planned.

The manor is reported in the Domesday Book of 1086, when it included Shapwick, Crichel and Up Wimborne. The estate was first referred to as Kingestune in 1170. David explained the hierarchy of ordinary people, the peasants who lived on the estate and worked for the lord of the manor. There were “villeins” who were tenant farmers with between 10 to 20 acres who in return had to work for 3 days per week on the lord’s land known as the demesne. The lord could impose taxes, such as on the marriage of a daughter and at the time of death. But at least on Royal manors people were granted security of tenure and were exempt from tax rises through regulations referred to as the Customs. In the Domesday Book 63 villeins were recorded, and 68 smaller farmers referred to as bordarii, with around 5 acres of land. There were also 7 cottarii who spent much of time working for the lord or the villeins. At the bottom of the pile were slaves called servii who had no rights. In total 153 families were recorded suggesting a total of nearly 800 people.

Attached to the estate were many acres of grassland and woodlands called the park, also know as the chase this is an area for hunting, for the personal use of the lord of the manor. The manor was a complex rural business run by a number of important individuals with specific responsibilities. The most important was the steward who managed the accounts and had overall control of the workforce. When necessary he would preside at the manor court in the lord's absence. The bailiff would allocate work to the peasants and be responsible for running repairs to buildings for which he would hire in skilled labourers such as

carpenters and blacksmiths. The reeve was chosen by the other villagers and it was his job to check that everyone turned up for work on time and that no-one stole any produce from the lord.

The lord of the manor had responsibility for law and justice, through the manor court which met minimally 6 times per year (4 quarter days and two law days) at the Moot at Cowgrove. The earthworks of this open air forum are still visible. Juries were made up of local people. The court was the focal point of the organisation of the estate where the tenants' duties and obligations were maintained.

The estate has passed through the hands of many people who lived extraordinary lives, one of whom was Alice de Lacy. By the 13th century it belonged to Henry de Lacy, who gave his name to the place. He was the Earl of Lincoln and he held other manors at Blandford and Shapwick, owning a chase which extended as far as Cranborne. It was during this period when the estate grew to over 100,000 acres, becoming one of the most important in the country. Tragic incidents resulted in the death of his two sons, leaving Alice de Lacy the sole surviving child and heiress to two Earldoms. Alice became an important pawn on the marriage market. King Edward I of England arranged for her betrothal in her 9th year to his nephew Thomas of Lancaster, Leicester and Derby; they married three years later. By the terms of their marriage settlement her great inheritance, which included the Earldom of Lincoln, was to go to Thomas, with reversion to Alice if she outlived him. In due course Thomas became the most wealthy man in England but died soon after. Needless to say Edward II reneged on the agreement and claimed her inheritance. Thereafter Alice spent many years of imprisonment and persecution but eventually Alice was able to reclaim some of her wealth and achieved a much happier second marriage to Eubulus le Strange. When Edward III claimed the throne from his father Alice benefited when her husband was granted estates due to his support of the new king. But her life continued along its dramatic course and when her husband died she was abducted, imprisoned, raped and forced to marry her assailant....she eventually died.

One example demonstrating the importance of the estate was when John of Gaunt (Ghent), who held the estate from 1363 to 1399, had just returned from France with his new wife Constantine Princess of Castille, he decided to spend Christmas at Kingston Lacy out of all the manors he held throughout the country. He threw a grand party and invited a large guest list including his father Edward III, his sister-in-law the Princess of Aquitaine, various influential barons and his brothers, as well as his personal household of several hundred strong consisting of knights and retainers, esquires, grooms and valets.

This brief note only partially covers the wealth of information that David delivered to the meeting but for those with an appetite for more I can recommend his book "Kingston Lacy an Undiscovered History" by David N Smith, which he produced and published himself.

Andrew Morgan

ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT

Druce Farm Roman Villa Excavation

Just a brief update. Work on this very interesting site continues and we have discovered more rooms and several mosaic floors. Working with Dorset County Museum we have enabled schools to visit the site and nearly 100 pupils, from primary schools to sixth formers, have enjoyed their first experience of a working archaeological site, including the opportunity to trowel and discover finds in real trenches. We regularly have visits from local groups such as the Puddletown Society and 27 members toured the site on 9th July. On 11th July a group from Warminster U3A, with Penny Copland-Griffiths, will visit. We recently enjoyed the company of Andrew Selkirk (editor-in-chief and founder of Current Archaeology) and we await another visit by Stephen Cosh and David Neal (the national authority on British mosaics) in the near future. Although managed by EDAS we are totally reliant on volunteers from numerous groups throughout Dorset and beyond. We have a great deal of work to complete this year so if you are interested in helping then please contact:

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

WIMBORNE SQUARE EXCAVATION 2012 UPDATE

As indicated in the brief report that appeared in the EDAS newsletter for March, because no secure datable evidence for the burials in Wimborne Square was obtained during the excavation, samples from three of the skeletons were sent to the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre's radiocarbon dating laboratories at East Kilbride. The Priest's House Museum has now received the results of these tests. They are quoted in conventional years BP (before 1950 AD) as 610 BP, 658 BP and 704 BP with each having a margin of error of plus or minus 30 years.

We are very grateful to local undertaker Nicholas O'Hara who generously donated a sum of money so these radio carbon dates could be obtained. The full report of the excavation is currently being prepared and it is hoped it will be available for publication early in 2015.

Gill Broadbent

EDAS Walk –Kingston Lacy 17th May 2014, led by David Smith

A few days after the May lecture, 17 EDAS members joined David Smith for a guided tour around the Kingston Lacy estate to get a perspective on how matters stood before the Bankes family and the National Trust came on the scene. Our walk took us through an area steeped in history ranging from Neolithic through Roman to Saxon and medieval to the time of the Enclosures acts in the 16th century. One of the fascinating things we learnt about the estate is that many names which appeared in the manorial records can still be found in the village.

Whereas Kingston Lacy takes its name from its ancient lords the Lacys, Earls of Lincoln, who held it together with Shapwick and Blandford, the meaning of the term "cyninges tun" was more interesting and relevant to our walk, roughly translating as "the king's fenced area or enclosure". In fact, Kingston Lacy is a 3,000 hectare remnant of a large royal manor which covered an area of over 12,000 hectares. It has its roots in the Saxon era when it served as an administrative centre for a royal estate within Wimborne manor. During medieval times it was the second largest manorial complex in the country and mentioned in the Domesday Book. It was first referred to as "Kingestune" in 1170.

Pamphill and Cowgrove are two of Dorset's most unspoilt villages. We started at Pamphill Green which was designated to graze horses, calves and foals as long ago as 1206. The green was the site for two fairs a year; was utilised for sports during the Tudor period; and was also used for archery. David told us that the road structure was started by the Bankes family. Since they were lucky enough to have income outside the estate, it was not necessary to make money from the estate – which is why the landscape has hardly changed over the centuries.

The whole area is beautiful and very tranquil. We walked through bluebells, pink campions and cow parsley and caught some glimpses of "Hathamars" - 50 acres of land given to Richard Hathamar in 1532. He ran the agriculture on the estate and was given the annuity of the land for himself and his heirs. The area has more recently been measured by the OS using modern technology as 49.2 acres! David explained that some of the fields remain exactly the same as they did in Saxon and medieval times and bear the same names as they did in the manorial records. Even the landscape remains the same apart from the demise of the elm tree and the introduction of poplars.

Our route took us down All Fools' Lane, the main highway between Winchester and Wareham in Saxon times. Inside the bluebell wood, we saw where the Roman road from Poole Harbour to Badbury Rings bisects the Saxon road around the area where the cyninges tun manor house was built. Very few royal residences survive from this period so it was a rare treat to see and walk in the large enclosure where King Ine's royal residence once stood. Ine was King of Wessex between 688 and 726. The mound still has a bank around it upon which would have stood a palisade fence; the building is thought to have been more than 30 feet long, with a tower at one end. The royal residence is referred to in the Anglo Saxon Chronicles and it is

fairly certain that it survived the Danish attacks that destroyed Wimborne monastery in about 998. The site was given to the Abbot of Sherborne in 1139.

Out of the wood and looking to the south, we could still see the old medieval “furlongs” which contained strips of land for the labourers. Each strip of land was equal to one day’s ploughing. Continuing along All Fools’ Lane, which by this time, had turned into a true sunken lane, we past Shaft’s Copse – where hazel was grown to make shafts for arrows – eventually arriving at Little Cowgrove Common.

Cowgrove is a charming mix of cottages and farm buildings and there are wonderful walks along the banks of the river along the Stour Valley Way. Until the 1700s, Cowgrove was the principle village on the estate. David pointed out various houses with cob walls thatched with wheat straw, featuring the traditional ridge design associated with the properties of the Kingston Lacy estate. He explained that previous to 1846 all farms were named by the people who farmed them. Now they have all been renumbered. Of particular note were Drews Cottage – a good example of a Dorset long house built in 1563 – and the Court House built in the mid 1500s for a demesne tenant Thomas Trender and featuring traditional lime wash.

Cowgrove Common is still grazed today. The 150 acres of meadow which are individually named are recorded in the Domesday Book. We ended our walk at the site of the Saxon watch tower which would have commanded views as far away as Christchurch and still has an impressive view over the towers of Wimborne Minster. We then made our way back past the Vine Inn and Pamphill’s tiny village school to the green. It was a thoroughly enjoyable morning.

Vanessa Joseph

Walks on Wednesday 18 June and Saturday 28 June at Tarrant Rushton Airfield led by member Peter Scriven

12 members plus 3 guests joined Pete on his walk on a very sunny evening on 18 June. Only 5 members joined him for the Saturday walk.

Built by the Wimpey construction company in seven months at a cost of £1 million – £40 million in today’s money – and opened in May, 1943, RAF Tarrant Rushton was home to two squadrons, Nos. 298 and 644, which flew the large Halifax four-engined bomber. The walk started at the war memorial at Windy Corner on which are inscribed these units and also the C Squadron of the Glider Pilot Regiment, the Fleet Arm, the Navy and the SOE who all operated out of this airfield. The Halifaxes were used to drop agents and supplies into Occupied Europe.

As we walked the taxiway around the perimeter Peter told us that it was originally 50’ wide, but much was removed after the war for building bypasses, motorways, etc. so now the width is only about 20’. We stopped at where the main north-south runway was and tried to envisage its 150’ width. In all there were 10 miles of road. Pete also reeled off various figures about the amount of cabling, bricks, concrete, etc that was used in the construction of the airfield and its 300 buildings. There were 4 large hangars of which 2 remain and immediately after the war they were used to hold food for the Dutch. Some 3,300 people worked the site which is at an altitude of 256’. The footings of the accommodation blocks can still apparently be seen in nearby woods as can bomb bunkers.

The airfield was built for the training of the Halifax bomber crews who had the dangerous task of towing wooden troop-carrying Horsa and Hamilcar gliders; the latter was able to carry tanks. The main ‘claim to fame’ for the airfield was the night before D-Day when at 11.55 pm 644 squadron took 3 gliders containing troops and equipment to France to land at Pegasus bridge. At the same time 298 squadron took another 3 gliders to land by the River Orne. Another 30-40 took part on D-Day itself. Gliders from Tarrant Rushton also took part in the Arnhem raid in September 1944 when 60 gliders took part, and in the crossing of the Rhine in March 1945.

The airfield was vacated by the RAF in 1946 and the following year the aviation and research company Flight Refuelling moved in. It remained there until 1980 when the site was closed and eventually returned to farmland.

Our walk then took us down to Tarrant Rushton church. It is an unusual shape – an equal-armed cross. The tower which was built into the nave is very squat and hardly rises above it. The bulk of the church is C14th although there are some earlier walls surviving. Above the interior of the south door is a lintel believed to be early C12th. Carved on it is the Agnes Dei, a man with a book and a man with a bird.

The chancel arch is Norman and high up on its eastern face are two large earthenware pots, known as acoustic jars, which it was believed improved the acoustics. Of particular interest are 3 squints, one of which was apparently to allow lepers from the nearby St Leonard's Hospital to see the altar through a window from outside. In the churchyard Pete showed us the grave of Sir Alan Cobham (1894 – 1973), one of the pioneers of aviation and founder of Flight Refuelling.

Many thanks to Pete for an interesting and very informative walk.

Peter Walker

EDAS Field trip to Lincolnshire led by Brian Maynard

On the second weekend in June 2014 seventeen members of EDAS made our way up to Lincolnshire (a journey of around 240 miles from Dorset) to join Brian and Shirley Maynard, plus Barney the dog, for our annual EDAS Field Trip. The target area was to the south east of Lincoln so everyone found suitable accommodation (caravan sites, cottages, hotels) in and around the area of Woodhall Spa and Horncastle.



Brian eased us into the rigors of a Field Trip on Sunday with a short "stroll" around an area of Louth know as Hubbard's Hill. The weather was perfect and we stretched our legs with a three mile walk, finishing along a river "gorge" which was very popular with the locals, and also had a tea room with ice creams so was also popular with the trippers!

Monday was a day of ancient and (almost) modern! In the morning we visited the fantastic Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at RAF Coningsby and after seeing (and feeling!) the modern Tornado fighters taking off we had a guided tour of the main hanger. Our knowledgeable guide showed us the Hurricane and Spitfires that belong to the flight and described the difference in construction methods of the two. The Spitfire was a completely new design whereas the Hurricane could trace its heritage back to WW1 biplanes! Sadly we were unable to see the Lancaster as it had suffered a hydraulic fault while at the D-day commemorations and was stuck in France!



We next moved on to nearby Tattershall Castle, one of the earliest brick built medaeval castles in the country. It was built by Lord Ralph, 3rd Baron Cromwell who was Lord Treasurer to Henry VI. It was built between 1434 and 1446 as a moated castle with curtain wall, Keep, Stable, Gatehouses and Kitchen, but was dominated by an imposing six story Tower, which forms the principal remains today. Lord Curzon, who was instrumental in the Ancient Monuments Act, saved and restored the castle in 1914 and on his death in 1925 it passed to the National Trust. The whole castle tower is very imposing and, having scaled the six flights of steps to the top, the views across the Fens are spectacular.



In contrast our final visit of the day was to, the now ruined, Old Bolingbroke Castle. Bolingbroke was originally built by Ranulph, Earl of Chester in 1220 but eventually passed to John of Gaunt and his son Henry, later to become Henry IV, was born here. The castle fell into disrepair during the Tudor period and was later involved in the Civil war Battle of Winceby in 1643, during which it was badly damaged. It was slighted (as were so many castles) in 1652 and the walls and towers torn down and thrown into the moat, which is how we find it today.

In the evening Bryan arranged for David Start, formerly of the Heritage Trust for Lincolnshire, to give us a general overview of the heritage of Lincolnshire. David explained the paucity of prehistoric finds and sites (there are four known Long Barrows) was due to the Geology and the low lying nature of the county, most flints being found on the two "higher" ridges that run roughly north-south. This also influenced the vernacular architecture which is known as "Mud and Stud" as there is very little useable stone in the county, other to the far west. David went on to describe the many religious establishments along the Witham valley, many established in close proximity to each other, possibly for more commercial (sheep farming) reasons than for piety. Overall an interesting and enjoyable talk by David.



proximity than for

As a follow on to the talk David had agreed to lead us on a walk exploring some of the abbeys along the Witham valley so on Tuesday morning we all met at Bardney Church. Built in 1434, the dedication is to St Lawrence. The nave was built with stone from Bardney Abbey and the chancel



with bricks from Tattershall Castle, some of which show finger marks from the builders! The church also contains an interesting exhibition of stonework recovered from the site of Bardney Abbey. We set off walking through flat Lincolnshire fields and soon saw the dominant buildings of a disused British Sugar plant which was in use from 1927 until 2001, closed due to the reduction in sugar consumption! On route, we visited a rare "prefab" timber (now upvc clad!) church at Southrey, before arriving at the remains of Topholme Abbey. This abbey

was founded in 1155 by monks of the Premonstratensian order, who were known as the "white cannons" as they wore a white habit. Being cannons they served as priests and missionaries in the local villages. The only upstanding remains are part of the refectory which has survived as a garden folly for Topholme Hall (which no longer survives).



as a garden

After a picnic lunch at the site we moved on, later arriving at the site of Bardney Abbey. David was involved with the community re-excavation place in 2011 to establish if the remains could be displayed but

of Bardney which took



unfortunately it was decided that the consolidation and repair required would be too costly so the abbey remains buried. However it was possible to get an idea of the scale of the abbey from the remaining earthworks, which follow the traditional footprint. It was founded in AD 675 by Ethelred, King of Mercia and became the resting place of the bones of Saint Oswald. Bede reports that the monks would not at first accept the bones of Oswald but when "a pillar of light shone skywards" they were convinced that he was indeed a saint and vowed to

always leave their gates open. This gave rise to a Lincolnshire saying "Do you come from Bardney?" which means that you have left a door open! The monastery was later re-founded by Gilbert de Gant for the Benedictine order in 1087. Following the dissolution the abbey was sold to Sir Robert Tyrwhitt who converted the buildings to a country house, but by 1700 it had fallen into disuse and the stone was used for local buildings. In 1909 excavation of the site was started by Revd Charles Laing, who continued each year until 1913. His work was published in 1922 by Harold Brakspear and the excavated remains were on view until 1933 when they were re-buried to prevent further erosion due to the weather and visitors feet!

Having walked back to our cars at Bardsey we re-assembled at the Bardsey Heritage centre for tea and scones (or rock buns?) while hearing more about the successful community excavation from David, and Barry of the heritage centre.

Many thanks to David for an interesting and enjoyable 8 mile walk on a lovely sunny day.

Wednesday, as is traditional on field trips, was a "free" day so trippers set off to follow their own particular interests, such as more aviation, family history or just taking it easy!



Thursday started with a navigation test, which we all passed! We found our way to Temple Bruer, once a major establishment of the Knights Templar (or the "Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon" to give them their full title).

Brian gave us a potted history of the Templars who started as a small group of Knights vowed to protect the pilgrims to the Holy Land, but were recognized as an order by the Catholic Church around 1129 and then went from strength to strength. Temple Bruer was a major sheep farming site which generated revenue for the Templars, but was also used as a practice ground for military manoeuvres. The complex consisted of a large number of buildings but the only remains today is the square south tower of the church. This consists of two floors, the upper accessed via a narrow spiral stair. The upper room was liberally decorated with graffiti, some dating back to the 1600s!

Our next visit was to Cogglesford Water Mill in Sleaford. This is the last water mill in Lincolnshire and we were welcomed by the two volunteer We were shown the process of milling and then the water was released and the mill in operation for ourselves. The mill is thought to be the last Sheriff's (or Shire Reeve) mill in England, and archaeological and Domesday show a mill on the site from Saxon times. It is thought to take its name ford crossing the river Slea on the route of the Roman road nearby (Cobblestones -> Coggle). While at the mill we met the local tourist officer excited that we were visiting all the way from Dorset and asked if they could group photo to go into a local paper – fame at last for EDAS!



working millers. we saw working evidence from the who was take a

After a picnic lunch by the river we moved on to the impressive church at Sempringham. A church already existed on the site when in 1131 Gilbert, son of a Norman Knight and a Saxon Lady, established a small community of seven nuns attached to the church. Land was given and in 1139 a Priory was established. Gilbert died in 1189 and in 1202 was canonized by Pope Innocent III and the order he founded became



known as the Gilbertines. The order flourished but was hit heavily by the Black Death during the 14th Century. After the dissolution the lands were granted to Edward Fiennes, Lord Clinton (ancestor of Sir Ranulph Fiennes and Ralph Fiennes). The present church has been much rebuilt (due to being "wobbly" as our guide described) but parts of it may date back to 1170. The southern doorway, now protected by a Victorian porch, represents classic Norman

architecture and the doors are probably 13th century with mediaeval iron scrollwork, possibly made locally. Sempringham has a strong Welsh connection as Gwenllian, daughter of the last Prince of Wales, Llywelyn, was brought to the Priory when she was just one year old in 1283 and spent her entire life there, dying in 1337 at the age of 54. This meant she never married and had children who could lay claim to the Welsh throne! There is an active "Princess Gwenllian Society" whose aim is to restore the memory of Gwenllian and who meet periodically at Sempringham.

For the final day of the Field Trip we all met in Lincoln. Our first visit was to the Royal bank of Scotland, or at least its basement! In 1973-4 an excavation prior to building work was carried out during which an unexpected Roman gateway was found. A Roman wall, originally built in AD200 was expected, but it was



found that around AD350 the wall had been widened and a pedestrian gateway (about 6ft wide) inserted. This was probably to allow access to the busy waterfront on the River Witham. We were shown the flagstones, worn down by thousands of feet and could even see where the gate dragged while being opened and closed (damp expanding the wood?). Some of the stonework of the wall was inscribed and decorated suggesting a high status public building had been demolished to provide material.

We next visited the new Archaeology museum, known as "The Collection". This is an impressive modern museum with a wide range of well-presented exhibits from in and around An example exhibit is the Iron Age log boat from Fiskerton, just to the east of The boat was found in the proximity of a raised trackway and is constructed single oak tree. It appears to have been deliberately sunk as an offering.



Lincoln. Lincoln. of a

Following lunch we all reconvened at the Cathedral, after a long steep climb up the appropriately named "Steep Hill"! We were met by our guide, who initially apologized for not being an historian but who



subsequently proved to be very knowledgeable and interesting. She started by showing us the earliest part of the Cathedral at the west front which was built by Remegius, a Benedictine monk who became the first Norman Bishop in 1092. As with many Cathedrals the building owes its mixed architecture to a series of "disasters" and subsequent rebuilding. In 1141 a fire severely damaged the building which was rebuilt by Bishop Alexander "the magnificent" using the latest methods of the day. Then in 1185 an earthquake damaged the structure and it was rebuilt by St Hugh, starting 1195, in the Gothic style thus

allowing more light into the interior. Hugh was said to have carried a Hod to help with the rebuilding but he died in 1200 before it was finished. The central tower collapsed in 1239 which resulted in further changes. Our guide pointed out the areas of the building where the modifications were apparent from misalignments and asymmetry of various features. In the 14th century the tower was raised making the Cathedral the tallest building in Europe (until it blew down in 1548!). We saw the magnificent choir screen from 1330 which, here and there, still retains splashes of its original bright colours. Amusingly the statues of the Bishops positioned along the screen all appeared to have the same heads, probably due to being repaired as a batch during a civil war! We were also shown the famous Lincoln Imp, an Angel Choir, said to be a devilish imp turned to stone by the Devil. Many other changes were made to the structure during the centuries and the result is the magnificent building we see today. Our originally booked one hour tour became two hours with our excellent guide and could easily have been longer given the architecture and history of the Cathedral.



were shown there, still small statues have the following the high up in the the angels! subsequent today. Our our excellent fascinating

As is traditional with Field Trips, we all re-convened later at a local hostelry (The Abbey Lodge, also near to the abbey!) for our final meal together before going our ways.

that evening remains of an separate

Many thanks to Brian for organizing yet another fascinating and enjoyable Field Trip which, as always, was over far too quickly. Lincolnshire is an interesting (if mostly flat) county which started to reveal some of its secrets and certainly deserves further exploration in the future.

Steve Smith

Britain: One Million Years of the Human Story - Exhibition at The Natural History Museum, London

If you're in London this exhibition is really well worth a visit. There is an entrance charge.

This article by Shaoni Bhattacharya is a direct reprint from New Scientist – her prose is much better than mine!

A groundbreaking display at London's Natural History Museum reveals the humans that occupied Britain for the past million years – and tells their stories

February is proving to be an astonishing month for Britain's ancient humans. First came news of the discovery of the oldest human footprints in Europe, found by a team including researchers from London's Natural History Museum. Now the NHM has brought together for the first time artefacts drawn from the entire history of early humans in Britain.

Britain: One Million Years of the Human Story is the synthesis of a 13-year-long project to explore human origins. Among the key artefacts on show is the so-called Swanscombe Man, a 400,000-year-old skull from Swanscombe in Kent. Also featured is a 500,000-year-old tibia, once part of an early human dubbed Boxgrove Man, and the world's oldest spear, at 400,000 years old, from Clacton-on-Sea in Essex.

The exhibition builds on the Ancient Human Occupation of Britain research project, headed by Chris Stringer, the NHM's expert on early humans. That project pushed back the known date of the earliest humans in Britain from around 500,000 years ago to 950,000 years ago.

"This is the big picture," says Stringer. He says that Britain has an unusually complete record of early human occupation, in terms of the evidence of human fossils, artefacts, fauna and flora. And it has been dated and reconstructed in great detail.

The decision by the NHM to feed important finds into the exhibition right up to its launch date has made the show unusually topical. For example, there is full coverage of the recent discovery of the world's oldest human footprints outside of Africa, in Happisburgh (pronounced haze-bruh) in Norfolk. The trail of elongated prints on the flat, muddy Norfolk coast were dated to around 800,000 years ago using pollen analysis and other techniques. The researchers also measured the length and width of the prints in a bid to estimate the height of the people who made them. Stringer, who jointly led the Pathways to Ancient Britain project (which encompasses Happisburgh) with Nick Ashton of London's British Museum, reckons the footprints were made by a male and several smaller people, perhaps a female and some children.

The exhibit starts with a mini hall of ancestors, where four busts of early humans are arranged from oldest to most recent: *Homo antecessor* (to whom the Happisburgh footprints are most likely to belong), *Homo heidelbergensis*, *Homo neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens*. And while none of them would win a beauty contests, their painstakingly reconstructed faces are full of character.

The journey through time is artfully arranged by themes, with visitors guided through the kinds of humans who occupied Britain, the artefacts of their lifestyle and culture, the animals they hunted or fought, and the climates they faced. There is even a narrow blue chasm of a room at the 450,000-year mark, representing the Anglian ice age. Here visitors can pause to reflect while the howling sound of icy winds engulfs them.

But the weather would have been somewhat better in the first and most "ancient" of the rooms, where a video tale of the newly found footprints is screened. Other artefacts on display, such as 950,000-year-old pine cones from Happisburgh, show that these humans probably lived in a temperate climate like that of southern Scandinavia today.

The next room fast-forwards to 500,000 years ago, revealing how *H. heidelbergensis* would have hunted rhinos and brown bears in the much warmer climate before the Anglian ice age. On display is Britain's oldest human fossil, a sturdy tibia from the left leg of the ancient man discovered in Boxgrove, West Sussex. Alongside, a thoroughly bloody video show is running. This features an "experimental" archaeologist shown making the kind of axe-like tools wielded at the time, and using them to cut up carcasses.

There is another first in the room showing Britain's early Neanderthal occupation, around 400,000 years ago. Here is the Swanscombe Man, which is in fact the skull of a young female, unearthed in a gravel pit between 1935 and 1955.

Stringer notes that the first use of fire by humans was around this time: "The Neanderthals were hunter-gatherers, and they were adaptable because we find them early in the warmer stage, and then later on in the cold stage." But there is a remarkable absence of any kind of humans when Britain entered a warmer, more hospitable climate 180,000 to 60,000 years ago. By that stage, the weather had warmed up sufficiently for hippos to bask in the tepid Thames river, and for lions, rhinos and straight-tusked elephants to roam over what is now London's Trafalgar Square.

The team wanted to make sure this was right, says Stringer: "We went back to the collections to see if we had missed any cut marks on animals, or stone tools [from that period], but we didn't find any." So, had the cold climate killed off the local humans or had they previously left for warmer climes? If they had migrated south, those on the continental European land mass would have been unable to return as the land bridge which had joined it disappeared after the Anglian ice age. Island Britain did not open up

again until 60,000 years ago, when sea levels dropped to expose a huge land mass archaeologists named Doggerland, allowing Neanderthals and *H. sapiens* to cross into Norfolk. Doggerland is now beneath the North Sea.

The room showing what happened when humans reappeared contains the real stars of the show. A few metres apart stand a small and stocky, friendly faced Neanderthal man and a taller, leaner, meaner-looking early modern human. At first glance, the larger modern man looks as if he has a cigarette hanging from his lips (see image, above right). In fact, it is a fine paintbrush which he is using to paint his upper leg. His ankles are also covered in a red ochre pigment. He lived 33,000 years ago in Paviland in Wales. Well, that's where the body he is modelled on was found – his head was from the Czech Republic. The moody modern man, the Neanderthal, and the gallery of ancestral heads at the start of the exhibition were made by Dutch palaeo-artists and identical twin brothers, Alfons and Adrie Kennis. Aside from those stunning realisations, there are other treasures: a human skull shaped into a bowl from Gough's cave in Cheddar Gorge, Somerset, and artwork carved into antlers. There are also early sewing needles – a "huge advance" says Stringer, which would have afforded a significant survival edge. The journey through time peters out somewhat in modern Britain, with NHM illustrating Britain as the human melting pot it has always been. A video shows celebrities, some of whose genetic make-up reveals them to be 1 to 2 per cent Neanderthal.

Nevertheless, the exhibition succeeds magnificently in pulling together all the strands of Britain's early human history, and in creating a real sense of how our ancestors lived. And despite the thousands of years that separate us, those reconstructed faces hold captivating pre-echoes of the humans we have become.

Britain: One Million Years of the Human Story is at London's Natural History Museum until 28 September 2014.

Keith Allsop

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DATE	EDAS EVENTS – 2014
19 th July 2014	CBA Open Day - Druce Farm Roman Villa Excavation
10 th September 2014	EDAS Lecture- Druce Farm Roman Villa, with Lilian Ladle
8th October 2014	EDAS Lecture – Cage Chantries of Christchurch Priory, with Dr Cindy Wood, Winchester University,
12th November 2014	EDAS Lecture – The Roman Army, Fact or Fiction, with John Smith
10th December 2014	EDAS Lecture – Saxon Wimborne and East Dorset, with Janet Seal

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