



Established 1983

## East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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### NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2016

**The next meeting will be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February.**

It has been brought forward by a week because of Lent which starts on Ash Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February.

#### **EDAS Lecture: “Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War” by Stephen Fisher of the Maritime Archaeology Trust.**

The first lecture of 2016 was by Stephen Fisher from the Maritime Archaeology Trust who came to talk about the Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War Project, being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project is running between 2014 – 2018 commemorating the centenary of that terrible conflict. Stephen explained that the objective is to raise awareness of the naval engagements that were critical to the conclusion of the war. He explained that the war at sea raged around the shores of Britain and that there are over 700 archaeological sites along the south coast including naval and merchant ships, troop and hospital ships, wharfs, ports and foreshore hulks. Many of the sites are unrecorded and are deteriorating rapidly; the project is offering a final opportunity to record them before they disappear.

Great Britain was the dominant naval power throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the new century; an island country that even today remains dependent on seaborne trade for survival. Germany entered a naval arms race to build a battleship fleet to match that of the British navy but First Sea Lord Fisher was determined to maintain British superiority. At a multinational conference in 1908 the major powers agreed in principle the Declaration of London, a treaty defining a code of maritime law, especially as it relates to wartime activities. Both Britain and Germany ignored it during the subsequent conflict.

At the start of the war the British enacted their naval strategy: a blockade of German ports, cutting it off from overseas trade and resources. The Northern Patrol and Dover Patrol closed off access to the North Sea and the English Channel respectively. In November 1914 Britain declared the North Sea to be a War Zone, with any ships entering the area doing so at their own risk. The blockade was unusually restrictive in that even foodstuffs were considered contraband.

The British Grand Fleet took position in the North Sea against the German High Seas Fleet. Britain's larger fleet maintained the blockade whilst Germany's fleet remained mostly in harbour, occasionally sailing forth to lure the British fleet into battle in an attempt to break the blockade and attack British shipping and trade. There were several small engagements between the fleets, but the most significant was Jutland starting 31<sup>st</sup> May 1916, when the largest tonnage of warships ever assembled engaged in battle. Britain lost many warships and their crews but remained in control of the North Sea and was able to maintain the blockade. Thereafter the Kaiser, afraid of its destruction, kept the German High Seas Fleet in port where it remained until the end of the war. The English Channel was blockaded by the Dover Patrol which was a smaller fleet, based on a core of fast destroyers but also included armed trawlers and drifters, paddle minesweepers, motor launches, submarines, airplanes and airships. With these resources it performed various duties in the south North Sea and the Dover Straits: carrying out anti-submarine patrols, escort duties, and it constructed mine barrages across the English Channel.

It was this blockade of German trade, which ultimately starved the German people of food and its industries of natural resources, that contributed to Germany seeking the Armistice of 1918.

However another arm of the German navy achieved notable success. In 1915, Germany declared a naval blockade of Britain, to be enforced by its fleet of submarines. The U-boats sank thousands of Allied merchant ships.

On 22 September 1914, while patrolling the southern North Sea, U-boat U-9 found a squadron of three old British cruisers which had been assigned to prevent German surface vessels from entering the eastern end of the English Channel. She fired four of her torpedoes and sank all three in less than an hour, killing 1459 British sailors. This act established the submarine as an important new component of naval warfare. The attack forced the admiralty to reconsider the defences of Scapa Flow, the designated anchorage of the British Grand Fleet during the First World War, which was undefended against the threat of German U-boat attacks. Defences were rapidly constructed by sinking 21 blockships and the deployment of nets laid at various depths to entangle enemy submarines. Work continued with the laying of defensive minefields and further supported by gun batteries; Scapa Flow was declared a safe base for the fleet in 1915.



Even though submarines normally attack by stealth, at the beginning of the war U-boat commanders often showed their humanity and gave a warning to enable crews of merchant ships to escape before their ship was sunk. One exceptional U-Boat captain was Commander Lothar von Arnauld de la Perière who was the most successful U-boat skipper; he sank 194 ships and always adhered to prize rules. He would stop the vessels, allow the crews to board lifeboats and direct them to the nearest port before sinking their ship, often with his boat's 88 mm deck gun. Another U-boat U-29 under Captain Otto Weddigen sunk three merchant ships in a matter of hours near the Isles of Scilly; the Andalusian, Heathlands and Indian City. In all cases he allowed the crew to escape by lifeboats before sinking their ships and no lives were lost. U-29 went on to sink HMS Dreadnought.

Whilst in dock the U-boats were protected in reinforced concrete pens or bunkers. One was located at Bruges and on the evening of 22nd April 1918 this was attacked by a naval squadron of 76 vessels carrying 1700 men led by Capt. Alfred Carpenter. The assault was a triumphant failure but it did result in temporarily blocking the entrance and provided a huge morale boost to the general public.



The U-boats initially achieved great success and caused shortages of food and other necessities, and were responsible for sinking a large number of merchant ships: over 6800 merchant ships were lost to the U-boats throughout the war with over 57,000 men lost. Initially merchant vessels were expected to sail independently but eventually the U-boats were defeated by grouping merchant ships into defended convoys. This was assisted by the increasing use of primitive sonar and aerial patrolling. There are over 3000 wrecks recorded in British waters and another 3000 that have yet to be located, 1000 of these wrecks lie along the south coast.



In early 1917, Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare, including attacks without warning against all ships in the war zone they declared around the British Isles. They were immediately successful and sank up to a quarter of all shipping entering British waters, including ships belonging to neutrals. This resulted in many civilian deaths, especially when passenger ships, like the Lusitania, were sunk. It also violated the Prize Rules of the Hague Convention. This turned neutral opinion against the German allies. It was a one of the causes of the US declaration of war on Germany.

Locally, HMS Fame sunk due to an accident just outside Poole Harbour on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1916. It was a robust fishing vessel, fitted with drift nets and able to cope with all weather conditions; along with many working boats it had been acquired by the navy and used for anti-submarine work. It would likely have been fitted with an anti-submarine gun and depth charges and used to maintain and patrol anti-submarine nets. There are about 50 wrecks in the seas around the Isle of Wight.



Stephen referred to the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, a treaty that was adopted on 2 November 2001 by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The convention is intended to protect "all traces of human existence having a cultural, historical or archaeological character," which have been under water for over 100 years. As yet the UK government has not signed it.

The team working on this project are multi-disciplined and whilst several are trained as underwater archaeologists many are involved in research work on the Admiralty Records held at the National Archive Centre at Kew. Every ship that was sunk is accompanied by a detailed entry with information provided by the most senior surviving member of the crew.

The project is always looking for further information and for volunteers. There is also a portable exhibition about Dorset, including a series of information boards, that can be requested for display at a suitable venue.

For further information please check out their website [www.forgottenwrecks.org](http://www.forgottenwrecks.org)

We thanked Stephen for a fascinating talk that was much wider in scope than the title suggested.

**Andrew Morgan**

### **UPTON PARK ROMAN HOUSE – Culture Volunteers Wanted**

**You may remember that last year local arsonists destroyed the reconstructed Roman House at Upton Country Park. The renovation work is about to start and VOLUNTEERS are wanted.**

They are looking for people with steel toe cap shoes/boots who can help us clear the Roman House site. There are many burnt timbers which need to be removed so that the next phase can take place.

You will have instruction and supervision on site but will need to be physically able and know how to lift safely (manual handling).

Contact Stefanie Gehrig Clark, Volunteer Coordinator, Culture Volunteers Poole

Email [culturevolunteers@poole.gov.uk](mailto:culturevolunteers@poole.gov.uk) or call 01202 262608 for more information.

Many EDAS members are involved in interesting activities, whether research projects or attending exhibitions, conferences and field trips, or travelling to places where they explore the local history and archaeology. Please consider writing an article for the newsletter so you can share the experience with other EDAS members. Several members have done so and this month I am delighted that EDAS member and local historian Wayne Barlett has submitted the following article about Dorset and the Late Viking Age.

## **Cnut the Great: Dorset in the Late Viking Age, by Wayne Bartlett**

The year 1016 sees the millennium of a remarkable, and a remarkably little-remembered, event. Exactly half a century before William of Normandy triumphed at Hastings, a young, inexperienced and unproven Viking warlord by the name of Cnut (alternatively Canute, Knut or Knutr) fought his Anglo-Saxon counterpart Edmund (Ironside) to a standstill and at the end of 1016 he emerged as the first Viking ruler of all England (though his father, the formidable Sweyn Forkbeard had come within an ace of doing so himself not long before).

It was in many ways a surprise turnaround in fortunes for Cnut. Not long before, Cnut had found himself badly caught out on the death of his father when an atypical burst of energy from the English king Æthelred ('the Unready' or more properly 'Unread' – 'No Counsel') led to an English force falling on the Viking army at Gainsborough in Lincolnshire and badly mauling it. Cnut had escaped, leaving behind a group of hostages minus their ears and noses. He himself though had got safely away back to Denmark, the land of his birth.

When he returned at the head of a Viking force in 1015, it was on Wessex that he fell. Wessex had been the site of the first ever Viking raid recorded in England when in 789 a group of three ships attacked and killed the king's reeve Beadheard at Portland. During the following century Wessex had almost fallen and had only survived through the stubbornness and perseverance of the redoubtable Alfred. But during the 10<sup>th</sup> Century a series of outstanding rulers such as Edward the Elder, Æthelstan and Edgar had headed a magnificent fightback that saw all of England at last under one Anglo-Saxon king.

The first decades of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century had seen the pendulum swing the other way. Æthelred had proved himself to be an unsuccessful king and it had appeared that England must fall at last to the Vikings until that surprising victory over Cnut. But this proved an unsustainable success and Cnut's attack 'at the mouth of the Frome' in 1015 swung matters the other way again.

Cnut arrived at the head of an armada said to be some 300 ships strong, a huge fleet by the standards of the time and one that suggested that he was set on nothing less than conquest from the start. The 17<sup>th</sup> Century Dorset historian Thomas Gerard (later published under the name of John Coker) suggested that the Viking fleet anchored in Poole Harbour on Brownsea Island and although this is not supported by other documentary evidence it is a likely enough hypothesis as such isolated spots were used by Viking fleets on many other occasions for protection. It was a cliché that the Vikings mastery of the sea led to their complete dominance in naval warfare but in this case it was one that was also in most cases true.

It has been suggested that Wareham was one of the most likely targets for Cnut's men during the initial assault on Wessex. Although archaeological evidence for the sacking of the town is in short supply, again it was a likely enough target. Wareham was an immensely important settlement at the time; the *Burghal Hideage* of the 10<sup>th</sup> Century listed it as the place with the third largest hideage in England after only Winchester and Southwark. The walls of the town, which had been a crucial *burh* in Alfred's time, had been refortified not long before in the reign of Æthelred but apparently to little effect.

The name of the odd survivor from the time has come down to us across the centuries. The moneyer in Wareham back then was a man called Ælgar. He was the man responsible for the mint in Æthelred's time but he continued to hold the post once Cnut became king. Here was a man who appeared to have been very politically astute. The holding of the mint was a great responsibility: every six years or so the currency would be reissued, giving both the moneyer and the king a chance to make some money (quite literally in this case). Yet it was an onerous role too: any moneyer caught cheating stood to be deprived of his hands or worse.

The Anglo-Saxon resistance to Cnut and his massive army centred on London, but the young English king Edmund, who took over when his unsuccessful father Æthelred died in 1015, moved his men down to the West Country to lead the defence of the realm. Several indecisive battles were fought, the first of them at Penselwood on the borders of Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire near Gillingham. It was fought by an old hillfort called Cenwalch's Castle, just a mile or so from the spot where Alfred had assembled his army before his great triumph at Edington against the 9<sup>th</sup> Century Vikings.

During the war that followed England was far from united against the Vikings and there is strong evidence of divided loyalties in Dorset. Several more battles followed that at Penselwood and in some of them at least it was written that Ælfgar, an English name attached to a man who was lord of Tewksbury in Gloucestershire and Cranborne in Dorset (where he later also held lands at Wimborne and Dewlish), fought at Cnut's side. At the Battle of Sherston in Wiltshire in 1015 the local militia, the *fyrd*, composed of men from Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire broke at a crucial point in the battle though a decisive defeat did not follow.

The climactic confrontation of what was a heavyweight battle fought across the south of England was at Assandun in Essex and when Edmund conveniently died shortly after Cnut became uncontested king of England (Denmark also becoming his soon after). Dorset and the surrounding parts of Wessex were still uncertain areas for the Viking king though. There were several rumours of plots against him from Devon and Dorset and to counteract these Cnut started to appoint his own men to positions of influence in the region.

Fascinating charter survivals from the period give us some insight into these men. One of them with the fascinating name of Ork was given land at Abbotsbury with his wife Tola. A lovely personal touch survives of their story. They were apparently childless and therefore gifted many lands in later life to St Peter's Abbey there, encouraging a monastic revival in the Benedictine foundation, little of which now remains apart from the magnificent but later medieval tithe barn. Ork was also given land at nearby Portesham as well as Hilton whilst Tola was granted land at Tolpuddle.

We have contemporary grants to other men too which are recorded for posterity. Land to the very Scandinavian-sounding Bovi was granted at Horton whilst another called Agemund was given property at Cheselbourne. These were not necessarily in the top rank of properties available but collectively suggest that Cnut was trying to protect his interests locally by appointing men he knew well and presumably could trust in positions of influence.

Ecclesiastic appointments were not forgotten either. Sherborne had suffered at the hands of Viking raids and in 1010 Bishop Æthelric of that place had complained that it was no longer possible to raise taxes from the area due to the great suffering that had taken place. Indeed the Abbey was forced to sell lands at Corscombe to cover the resultant deficit. Later a man named Ælfmær had been appointed Bishop of Sherborne by Cnut. This was probably a controversial appointment. The slaughter of the then Archbishop of Canterbury Ælfheah by Viking raiders at Greenwich in 1012 (his head smashed in it was said by ox bones thrown at him by drunken Vikings) had followed his capture in his ecclesiastical city shortly before. It was said that Canterbury had been treacherously betrayed by no less a person than the said Ælfmær for whom Sherborne was a later prize in return for services rendered.

We know that the Viking king visited Dorset in person on several occasions. Cnut and his remarkable wife Emma (through whom Duke William of Normandy would in part trace his claim to England in 1066) visited Sherborne Abbey during his reign and were much moved by the sorry state that the buildings were in. They made generous grants to Sherborne, directing that the roof should be repaired to stop it leaking. Cnut also ordered that prayers should be said for his soul.

Cnut was also a benefactor of Cerne Abbey. This was at the time a very young foundation which had only been in existence for a few decades. The Abbey had become the residence of a very famous religious contemporary commentator, Ælfric of Cerne, a homilist of the period who had bemoaned the ease with which the Vikings had won their success. He was caustic in his criticism of the sinful English and had won much fame in the process of writing it. Cerne had in all probability been sacked by Viking raiders and Cnut's efforts to support it may well have been an attempt to right a wrong committed by his own men in recent times.

Cnut's remarkable patronage of the Church was in many ways the great story of his reign. Viking Denmark had only recently been converted to Christianity and there appear to have been many warriors stubbornly addicted to their old pagan beliefs. Cnut went the other way and the highlight of his reign was undoubtedly his visit to the Pope in Rome to attend the coronation of the Holy Roman Emperor, Conrad II. It was an act that established Cnut as a bona fide European statesman.



Despite his European-wide field of operations Dorset and Wessex continued to play a key part in Cnut's story. Most significantly of all was the place of his death, Shaftesbury Abbey, on 12 November 1035. Here above the Blackmore Vale Cnut breathed his last, a man of about forty years of age who had ruled for two decades over England, Denmark and, from time to time, Norway, a unique claim to fame. It was appropriate that here too was the last resting place of a venerated Anglo-Saxon martyr king, Edward, killed it was said by his own stepmother, Elfrida, as a result of which the late and not very lamented Æthelred had become ruler of England. Cnut cleverly fostered his reputation as a defender of Anglo-Saxon orthodoxy rather than a Viking upstart by such acts and choosing Shaftesbury for the place of his death can be seen as a calculated near final act of statesmanship. The last such act was his decision to arrange for his burial in the Anglo-Saxon mausoleum at Winchester.

The Viking interlude in the history of England did not long survive Cnut. William the Conqueror was of course in his own way a Viking too though one who had made his own very particular way in the complicated politics of Normandy and France. His conquest unlike Cnut's was absolute, final and definitive. Yet hints of an Anglo-Danish legacy lived on. The Viking kings like Cnut had a famous bodyguard, their 'huscarles'. Domesday Book later recorded that payments were still being made to these by the large Dorset burhs of Bridport, Dorchester, Wareham and Shaftesbury, a tantalising glimpse of a last hurrah for an era that was already fast disappearing within three decades of the great denouement at Hastings.

**Wayne Bartlett is a local author and historian. His latest book – *King Cnut, The Viking Emperor and the Forgotten Conquest of England in 1016* – is being released by Amberley Publishing Ltd. later this year.**

### **Priest's House Museum – HLF Bid for Phase-2 Development**

The Priest's House Museum (PHM) has recently submitted a bid for Heritage Lottery Funds to undertake the second phase of the development of the museum facilities. As you would expect EDAS is fully supporting the bid.

The society has a strong relationship with the PHM and regularly uses its facilities for a wide range of activities. You will remember that a few years ago we were invited to use the Open Learning Centre and the gardens for the very enjoyable garden party we organised to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Last year, when EDAS hosted the annual Conference for the Council for Independent Archaeology, we held a reception at the museum when over forty delegates from across the United Kingdom enjoyed a conducted tour around the premises. We frequently use the Open Learning Centre for post excavation research, when we process finds recovered from our excavations. The quarterly EDAS committee meetings and the regular meetings held by the East Dorset Archaeology Planning Group are now held in the museum. The society regularly supports events organised by the museum and we have information about EDAS and material from our excavations on permanent display.

Several EDAS members are volunteers in the museum; some are involved in curating the important archaeological material displayed in the archaeology gallery or held in the museum archive.

The museum plays an important role in Wimborne and East Dorset and we are delighted to demonstrate our support to the people involved with making it such a success.

**Andrew Morgan**

## CRANBORNE CHASE AONB – FOUNDATIONS OF ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

The Foundations of Archaeology Project celebrates the work of the pioneering archaeologists who first identified the rich upland archaeology of south Wiltshire and north east Dorset.

EDAS was contacted by the CCAONB in the early phase and because the scope of the project included NE Dorset we were delighted to support their HLF bid to fund the Foundations of Archaeology project

The project will run between Autumn 2015 to Spring 2017, and the team is organising a variety of interesting events for the general public. A number of EDAS members have enjoyed several events, but there is a problem with regards numbers, as each event is restricted to approx. 30 people, so it's on a first come basis. I have discussed this with Philippe Planel and he has agreed to organise events for EDAS members if there is enough interest. We will consider this invitation and try to organise something for the summer period.

Meanwhile the February events are excellent and well worth attending if at all possible.

### February Events

**6 February - Wor Barrow clearance** from 10.00 am. Hand tools only. A convivial day based around clearing the two smaller barrows adjacent to the Wor Barrow of vegetation - hot or cold depending how close you are to the resulting bonfire.

**13 February - Devizes museum visit** at 2.00 pm. David Dawson of the Wiltshire Museum (Devizes) has kindly agreed to arrange a special visit to the collections and archives of the museum. Two of the founding fathers of archaeology -Cunnington and Colt-Hoare, will be the focus of the visit. There will be a guided tour of the nationally important prehistory collections, many of which were excavated by Cunnington and Colt Hoare, and there will also be a rare opportunity to see some original manuscripts and watercolours. Bookings will be limited to 25. There is no cost for this visit. Tea/coffee will be served on arrival (also free!).

**20 February - Bokerley Dyke walk** 10.00 am. Our first walk of a linear feature; part of the Pitt-Rivers story and led by Claire Pinder (Dorset County Archaeologist). May not be easy underfoot, appropriate footwear essential.

**27 February - Stourhead visit.** Arrive at 10.00 for coffee.

- Field visit in the morning with Martin Papworth (archaeologist and Colt Hoare enthusiast)
- Lunch in the restaurant or bring your own packed lunch
- Talk from Emily Blanchard (historian) in the hall
- Tour of the house - focusing on the Colt Hoare library
- Tour by Alan Power (garden expert)

This visit is being arranged by Mike MacCormack, general manager at Stourhead, and the focus of the visit will of course be Sir Richard Colt Hoare. The visit will be contained within Stourhead estate but it is a big area and will involve some walking, so appropriate footwear please. Mike has asked to be informed if anyone has any mobility or other issues he should be aware of.

There is a limit of 30 people from this event. The event is free, but we will in this instance accept a voluntary contribution of up to £5.00 per person at the end of the day. You won't need to pay the NT anything - they will invoice the FoA Project separately.

As usual these events are bookings only, on a first come basis.

Please contact Philippe Planel: [philippeplanel@gmail.com](mailto:philippeplanel@gmail.com)

For further information: <http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk/our-work/foundations-of-archaeology/>

## Bournemouth University - Society for Archaeology and Anthropology

Over the last few years we have been developing a relationship with the BU students's society trying to identify opportunities that will be mutually beneficial. This year we will hold our April Lecture Finding Pitt-Rivers by Jane Ellis-Schön of Salisbury Museum at the Allsebrook Theatre on the BU Talbot Campus.

For information the society has invited us to attend a series of lectures they are organising this April, which will include:

- Tim Darvill - Stone Henge
- Mike Parker Pearson- Blue stones
- Kate Welham - The Stone Henge landscape
- A comparative view - with a druid
- Jane Ellis-Schön - Finding Pitt Rivers (the EDAS lecture on 13<sup>th</sup> April)

The dates have not yet been finalised, apart from the EDAS lecture, but we will advise you as soon as we have them.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Note:** our April meeting will be held at Allsebrooke Theatre in Bournemouth University. The lecture about Pitt-Rivers has been chosen for our second joint lecture with the Students' Archaeology and Anthropology Society.

### 2015-2016 Programme

Date	Speaker	Title
Wed 3rd Feb 2016	Dr. John McNabb, Southampton University	"New Insights into Human Evolution"
Wed 9th Mar 2016	AGM	Members evening: Edrys Barkham – Beaker Burial at Bryanston; Keith Allsop - 2015 Field Trip to Bury St Edmunds and East Anglia.
Wed 13th Apr 2016	Jane Ellis-Schön Salisbury Museum	<b>"Finding Pitt-Rivers"</b> <b>NB. this lecture will be held in the:</b> <b>Allsebrooke Lecture Theatre, (next to the library),</b> <b>Bournemouth University</b> <b>Talbot Campus</b> <b>Fern Barrow</b> <b>Dorset</b> <b>BH12 5BB</b>
Wed 11th May 2016	Dr Alex Langlands, Swansea University	"Mapping the Genius Loci: Exploring the Character of Space and Place in the Ordnance Survey"

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



## EDAS COMMITTEE VACANCIES

This is still time to apply to become a member of the EDAS Committee, please complete the following application form and apply by 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016.



### East Dorset Antiquarian Society

#### GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBER NOMINATION FORM

<b>Name of Nominee</b>		<b>Nominee's signature</b>	
<b>Name of Proposer</b>		<b>Proposer's signature</b>	
<b>Name of Seconder</b>		<b>Seconder's signature</b>	

**Contact Telephone Number:**

**Date:**

Please return the completed form to Geoff Taylor, EDAS Secretary, by 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016, using either:

**post:** 224 Leigh Road, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 2BZ

or

**email:** [geoffnsue@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:geoffnsue@hotmail.co.uk)