

Established 1983

# East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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## NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2016

**Don't Forget  
our  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
will be held on  
Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

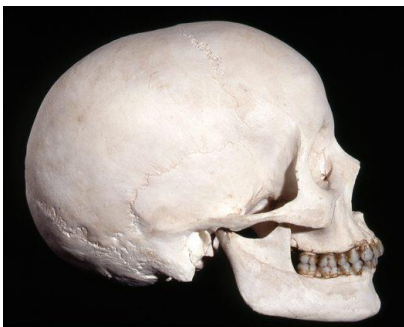
### EDAS Lecture: 'Bones in Contention' by Dr. John McNabb

John, or Mac as he is usually known, is a senior lecturer at Southampton University and a member of the Centre for the Archaeology of Human Origins. He's particularly interested in the behaviour and cognitive development of our human ancestors. Mac brought along some of the University's valuable collection of casts of skulls covering human evolution over 6-7 million years, and some of the tools made by our ancestors, to take us through the key stages that we now understand as leading to the development of *Homo sapiens sapiens* – us! Parts of the story remain contentious and new discoveries may well overturn long-held views.



In *Homo sapiens* (human), *Homo* is the genus – the broader family of species to which we belong – and *sapiens* (wise) the species. This is a very simplified summary of something that's quite complex (look it up on Wikipedia). Grouping is done by several methods, particularly morphology, i.e. the shape and structure of the animal. More recently, though, genetics has had a major impact on classification, providing proof (or not) of links.

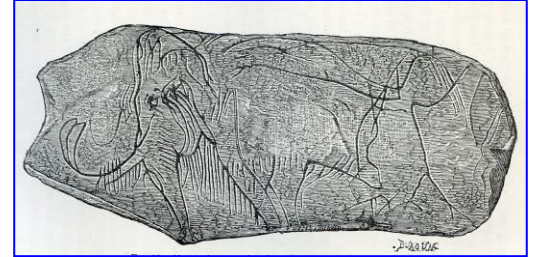
We are, then, a sub-species of *Homo sapiens*, sometimes called anatomically modern humans and so good (or vain) they named us twice. Modern humans emerged around 200 thousand years ago ("kya") and share, amongst other things, a flat face and a chin (we have no idea why). So we are a fairly young species which has spread very quickly across the world. The Americas were the last populated, most securely 12-13kya, though some suggest 15-16 kya; Australasia was populated thousands of years earlier. We share ancestry with the apes about 7 million years ago ("mya"), whilst genus *Homo* probably started sometime before 2 mya. A key distinction is that the apes' spinal cord enters at the rear of the skull whilst ours enters the skull centrally, related to adaptations to our being bipedal.



Our closest living relatives are the chimpanzees/ bonobos, genetically only 2-3% different from us. So, there are no other human species now living, but that wasn't always the case. *Homo floresiensis* (or 'the hobbit') lived on the Indonesian island of Flores perhaps as late as 18kya, a species that became dwarfed to about a metre tall because its island had no significant predators and size wasn't a benefit. It is possible that it, or similar species, could have

given rise to the folklore of 'little people'. We also lived alongside Neanderthal man (*Homo neanderthalensis*) until about 40-30kya, and we've only found out that modern humans share some DNA with the Neanderthals in the last 10 years (in some populations it may be 2 or 3%). Basically, there are 'speciation events' when there is an adaptation, or branching off, of some of a species' population. There is, thus, a period when such 'cousins' co-exist; one line does not necessarily die out and the other thrive, though clearly there are many reasons why that might happen.

Mac showed us a reproduction of the carving of a woolly mammoth on mammoth ivory, found in 1864. It was a key part of learning about 'deep time' – that the world was much older than the Biblical 4004 BC calculated by Bishop Ussher in the 17<sup>th</sup> century – since it clearly showed that early humans had lived alongside animals now extinct. It was made by what is sometimes called Cro-Magnon man from finds in 1868, though that's just a name for early modern humans. Art like this is important in defining modern human behaviour, i.e. the ability to think symbolically, which is also the basis of true language. *Homo sapiens'* art goes back a very long way, some would argue as much as 100,000 years, but there is no evidence that either *H. floresiensis* or *H. neanderthalensis* produced any, even though there is good evidence of other Neanderthal behaviours that are similar to us, such as complex tools and communities that clearly looked after the old and infirm.



Neanderthals were the first ancient species found, and cover 300-30 kya but are only known in Eurasia. They were clearly different to us in having long, low skulls, no chin and large brow ridges, but their brains were at least as big



as our own and hearths show that they used fire. Their prognathism, the forward pointing face, was effectively used as a 3<sup>rd</sup> hand from the marks on their teeth, a trait shared with some earlier ancestors. Their Levallois technology, producing sophisticated and standardised D-shaped flints for scrapers or knives, was an innovative technology 30-40 thousand years ago. Projectile points could also be made; fitted into shafts, these are the earliest known composite tools. Teaching these complex



techniques does suggest development of a language.

*Homo heidelbergensis* appeared about 700kya in Africa, with some migrating to Europe and becoming the ancestors of the Neanderthals and others evolving into modern humans who then migrated to Europe. They share



many features with *Homo sapiens*, albeit with a larger brow ridge, and had brain sizes little smaller. Their material culture is quite clear – bi-facially flaked hand-axes as shown, which are portable tools and suggest planning ahead. A 300,000 year old hand axe found in Britain might be considered as art and, even if they didn't have a full language, there must have been fairly sophisticated communication skills to teach tool-making. A fire-



hardened spear head from Clacton c.400kya shows they were unique animals in not being afraid of fire; using fire also gives the valuable option of extending the day. They lasted until 200kya, perhaps even 100kya, so overlapped in time with modern humans and Neanderthals.

Although *H. heidelbergensis* appear to have originated in Africa, recent thinking suggests there may have been purely Eurasian hominins evolving from separate speciation events. For example, skulls from Spain of *Homo antecessor*, extant from about 1.4mya-780kya, whilst a possible *Homo erectus* has been found in Georgia from c.1.7mya, which would be very soon after the earliest known in Africa. It's unclear exactly how these fit into our evolution, or have interacted with species migrating from Africa.



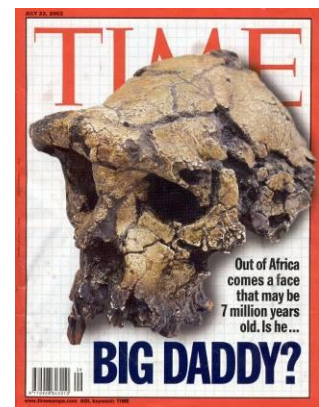
Usually, though, our ancestry is traced to *Homo erectus* in Africa, known from c.1.7-1mya. These are the first with a body plan like ours, crucially in the pelvis and femur, so that they were fully bipedal and also tall and strong. Skulls, of course, were different and brain size noticeably smaller than our own, though big enough to devise simple hand-axes. There's a clear step change in body and increased brain size from *Homo habilis* who preceded them, and it may be that they took advantage of the midday period when predators rest because it's hot – the body is hairless, so can sweat better, and made for running. The *H. erectus* body is also slimmer yet supports a bigger brain, thought to be the result of increased energy from eating meat (the modern brain is 2% of body weight but uses 18% of our energy). *H. erectus* is thought to have lived in large groups, though it's hard to say whether the larger brain developed as a result of the more complicated social relationships or the other way round.



The predecessors, back to 2 million years ago, were *Homo habilis* (shown here) or *Homo rudolfensis*, but specimens are few and too poorly preserved for certainty. They were more apelike, with long toes and fingers for grasping, and probably not constantly bipedal. One was a tool user but we don't know which, and there may have been other species using the tools known from across Africa, though none made hand-axes.



Before that, fossils become rarer and more difficult to fit into our evolutionary scheme. Genus *Paranthropus* (several species; *robustus* pictured) were partly bipedal, had a clear crest on the skull, big cheekbones and huge teeth, clearly adapted for very tough food. They lasted until something over 1mya, so overlapped with *H. habilis* and, if perhaps they couldn't compete in the long run, had found a niche that served them well for a very long time. *Australopithecus* has some quite famous examples, including 'Lucy' (*A. afarensis*) from 3-3.5mya. She is quite slight in build and about 1m tall, yet the male skull Mac showed us was huge. It's possible that they were sexually dimorphic, like gorillas, where the male has a 'harem' and is big as part of a threat display to drive off other males. Another *afarensis*, the 'Taung child' shown here from c.2.6mya, actually has the fossilised brain.



*Kenyanthropus platyops* (3<sup>rd</sup> picture above) from c.3.5mya is clearly not an ape from the skull, and may have been partly bipedal. Whether it was one of our ancestors is hotly disputed. We have, though, taken the earliest stone tools known back from 2.8 to 3mya with finds in the last year, so they may not just be associated with *Homo* as we'd thought; another reason not to get too smug about our sapient/wise credentials. A few earlier fossils are known, and the earliest possible hominin (and certainly not an ape) is *Sahelanthropus tchadensis* from 6-7mya – called "Big Daddy" by *Time* magazine.

Evolution is complex, but whilst there are gaps there are no 'missing links'. New hominins are found reasonably frequently, so there is lots to keep researchers happy. But Mac is also keenly interested in the development of our understanding of evolution in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and is the first researcher in 50 years to re-examine the stone tools from the Piltdown Man hoax a century ago. If this interests you, then his book is highly recommended: J. McNabb. 2012. *Dissent with Modification*. Archaeopress.

I can't express here the sheer enthusiasm that Mac showed in presenting this fascinating talk, shared by the audience from the keen questions asked. Many thanks to him for a great evening.

**Geoff Taylor**

## **On False Gods - an interesting request from an Italian student**

Recently we received a request from Mariano, a MA student at Milan University who is preparing his final dissertation about the work *De falsis diis* (On False Gods). This is a homily prepared by Aelfric Grammaticus, perhaps better known as Aelfric the first Abbot of the Benedictine Abbey at Cerne and a prolific writer. Based on manuscriptal evidence Mariano has been able to pinpoint its composition to about AD991-994. Mariano explained that it is a peculiar text regarding pagan gods - Danish gods in particular - and the superiority of the Christian God. Aelfric was a highly respected scholar who was sent to Cerne Abbey, founded by Aethelmaer c. AD987, to develop the Benedictine monks soon after it was founded.

One of the aims of the research is to find the reason that drove Aelfric to write this text and Mariano believes the answer lies in the cultural and historical challenge to Christian beliefs brought by the invading Danes.

He has asked for help with any historical, archaeological and general information. He is particularly interested in Danish raids and settlements during this time when Aelfric was in Cerne Abbas. We are delighted to have found two local experts who are willing and able to provide some support.

We look forward to hearing more about this fascinating subject.

*Andrew Morgan*

## **facebook: Welcome to the modern age**

We now have an EDAS Facebook page.

The intention is to complement the EDAS web site using brief, timely and more directed content such as monthly updates on meetings, news and special events etc. We also want you, our members, to interact with us so please feel free to post comments/photos etc.

As this is the world of social networking, please become a "fan" of the page and "like" it. Then suggest the page to your own contacts to allow them to become fans.

<https://www.facebook.com/dorset.archaeology>

*Vanessa*

## **EDAS WALKS PROGRAMME**

### **Sunday (am) 17 April 2016: Christchurch Blue Plaques Walk with Sue Newman & Mike Tizzard**

Christchurch 'Blue Plaques' walk with our members Sue Newman and Mike Tizzard. This walk around the town should take about 1.5 hours.

Please **meet at 10.30** at Saxon Square Shopping Centre where there is a long term car park. Unfortunately, car parking charges apply every day.

Any queries please contact Sue [newmansue@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:newmansue@yahoo.co.uk) 01202 463373 or Mike [m.tizzard@ntworld.com](mailto:m.tizzard@ntworld.com) 01202 476242.

**Whilst there is a limit of 15 for the Priory tour in the afternoon (see below) there is no limit on this walk.**

### **Sunday (pm) 17 April 2016: Christchurch Priory tour guided with Mike Beams**

Mike Beams an EDAS member will give members a guided tour of the Priory where he is a guide and Chairman of the Property Committee.

**We need to limit the number attending to 15 so this will be a bookable event.**

Please contact Peter Walker [peter@peterwalker.info](mailto:peter@peterwalker.info) to book your place and **meet at 2.30** in the entrance porch.

The tour will take approximately 2 hours and will include the crypts and museum (flight of steps to negotiate). There is normally charge for the tour of £3 but Mike will just ask for donations if people would like to give one.

### **Sunday 9 October 2016: Rediscovering Wimborne's Saxon Foundation**

EDAS member David Reeve has offered to travel down from Bristol to lead a walk round Wimborne to explore the early boundaries.

Please make a note in your diaries for this walk.

***Further details will appear in a later newsletter.***

**Many EDAS members are involved in interesting activities, whether research projects or attending 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 your experiences with other EDAS members.**

## UPTON PARK ROMAN BUILDING

A few EDAS members were able to volunteer with the demolition of the fire-damaged Roman Building constructed at Upton Park. The event was managed by Culture Volunteers Poole and Donna Price. It wasn't quite as expected, as a contractor was brought in for health and safety reasons.

They had planned a day but the work was done in about 2 hours. The Park Rangers can now repurpose the site as an arena area.

There is a small possibility that the building will be reconstructed within the Country Park but it's likely that a more protected site such as a school will be chosen.

If I hear of any decisions then I'll let EDAS know as some members might want to practice their pre-industrial carpentry skills!

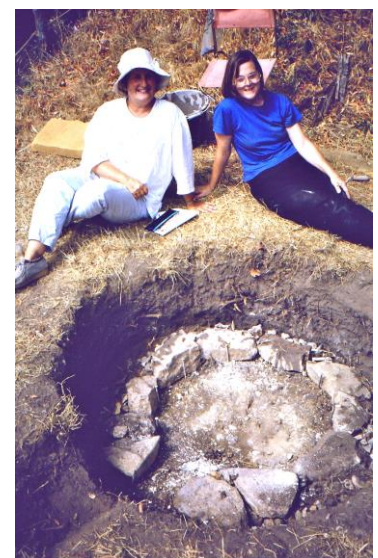
I'm going up to the site this weekend to rescue some cut stones in advance of the ground works. These were apparently moved from the Bucknowle Villa site so it would be a shame to lose them and I'll be looking into the provenance of them too.

### **Tim Wilson**

PS. Alan Hawkins commented that the kiln or oven reconstruction came from the site at West Stafford - in advance of gravel extraction. Janet, Anita and Alan marked up the stones before removal and Di Watkins from Poole Museum made a photo record. They then rebuilt the kiln/oven at the UPC Roman Farm.

When the building was completed it was formally opened and a time capsule was buried inside the building near the entrance. Alan asks whether it has been recovered? Tim do you know?

The photograph is from our unofficial archive collated for our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is this the very kiln?



*Les belles dames d'archéologie*



## **Bournemouth University - Society for Archaeology and Anthropology**

Over the last few years we have been developing a relationship with the BU students' 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.

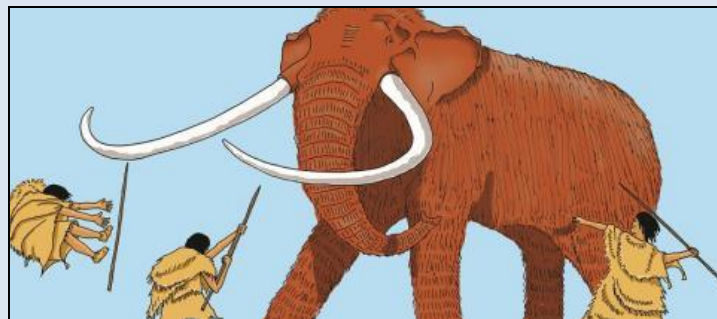
For information the society has invited us to attend a series of lectures they are organising this April, which will include:

- 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 dates have not yet been finalised but we will advise you as soon as we have them.

### **RED HOUSE MUSEUM and GARDENS EVENT**

#### ***Surviving the Stone Age***



This family friendly exhibition looks at how the earliest people survived over 300,00 years ago to 8,000 years ago.

When climate changes from warm to freezing how would YOU survive?

Packed full of fun activities, perfect for taking the grandchildren.

Includes recent finds from flooded settlements under the Solent!

**Admission Free**  
**From 23<sup>rd</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> April**

**Red House Museum and Gardens**  
**Quay Road**  
**BH23 1BU Christchurch**

**Tel: 012022482860**



## EAST DORSET ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

### FINDING PITT-RIVERS

by

Jane Ellis-Schön, the Project Curator for Salisbury Museum

**A wonderful opportunity to find out first-hand what it is like to reappraise an iconic collection of archaeology.**

**WEDNESDAY 13<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2016 at 7.30 pm**

Salisbury Museum holds the Pitt-Rivers Wessex Collection, a range of archaeological material that includes excavated artefacts from Cranborne Chase as well as items from London, Sussex and Yorkshire from the earlier part of his career. The collection focuses on the last 20 years of his life and was on display in his museum at Farnham until the 1960s.

EDAS, in association with the Bournemouth University Archaeology and Anthropology Society, is pleased to invite you to this fascinating talk given by Jane Ellis-Schön, the Project Curator for Salisbury Museum's 'Finding Pitt-Rivers' Project funded by Arts Council England and the Pilgrim Trust. Jane's talk describes the project and highlights objects from our landscape in the Pitt-Rivers collections.

***Non-members will be invited to make a donation of £2***



**ALLSEBROOK LECTURE THEATRE,  
TALBOT CAMPUS,  
BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY,  
FERN BARROW, BH12 5BB**



## 2015-2016 Programme

Date	Speaker/Leader	Title
Wed 9th Mar 2016	AGM	Members evening: Edrys Barkham –'Pits and Pottery - Beakers 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>
Sun 17th April 2016 -AM-	Sue Newman & Mike Tizzard	<b>Christchurch Blue Plaques Walk</b> Please meet at 10.30 at Saxon Square Shopping Centre where there is a long term car park.
Sun 17th April 2016 -PM-	Mike Beams	<b>Christchurch Priory tour</b> Mike Beams an EDAS member will give members a guided tour of the Priory where he is a guide and Chairman of the Property Committee. <b>We need to limit the number attending to 15 so this will be a bookable event.</b> Please contact Peter Walker <a href="mailto:peter@peterwalker.info">peter@peterwalker.info</a> to book your place. Please meet at 2.30
Wed 11th May 2016	Dr Alex Langlands, Swansea University	<b>"Mapping the Genius Loci: Exploring the Character of Space and Place in the Ordnance Survey"</b>
Sun 9 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2016	David Reeve	<b>Rediscovering Wimborne's Saxon Foundation:</b> a walk around the Town's early boundaries

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