



Established 1983

# East Dorset Antiquarian Society

Charity No: 1171828

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## NEWSLETTER – October 2017

### MY INTRODUCTION TO ARCHAEOLOGY by Finn Stileman

In the summer of 2014 while researching my local history I came across the East Dorset Antiquarian Society who were working on the Druce Farm Roman Villa site. By this point I had decided that archaeology was a discipline I wanted to get involved in, however, being 15 at the time, I was sceptical that I would be accepted into any group. None the less that summer I sent an email to Lilian Ladle and the rest is history... as they say.

While I had been field walking since the age of 11 and metal detecting since the age of 13, actual archaeology was completely new to me. In order to save the villa from an over-excited 15-year-old with a trowel, I was placed alongside experts of the team - a debt Carol O'Hara refuses to drop quietly! While I have learnt a great deal from the past four years - from the profiles of Black Burnished Ware pottery to the necessity of constant note making - what has surprised me the most is how social and human the experience of a dig is. As a 15-year-old I assumed I would leave with memories of treasure and glory, but the Druce Farm excavations to me are best encapsulated by the surreal but wonderful moments such as the daily squeeze into the Landrover – I believe 11 people is the current record – or the microclimate of Druce that managed to tear apart our gazebo leading to precarious repairs using rope, tape and random pieces of farm machinery. Lunchtime conversation is also an interesting part of the routine; I've ended up learning more about the extraordinary antics of this pensioner demographic during the last century than anything of the Roman period... both of which seem equally mysterious to me!



Finn excavating a large pit

Another misconception I arrived with in 2014 was how simple it was to interpret archaeology – perhaps due to my early addiction to Time Team, in which a broadcasted conclusion would be reached after three days. It is only now that I appreciate how ambiguous, confusing and fundamentally complex archaeology can be – there are always more questions than answers, and always the sounds of Lilian exclaiming “oh dear” in the background. The most difficult part of archaeology for me has been the paper record and learning how exactly a feature is represented in an objective and comprehensive way – several times I have made silly mistakes in the record which I have had to spend hours correcting. How the team cope with all the post-excavation work I have no idea.

When I've been asked by friends and relatives what I've been up to this summer, it has been rather difficult explaining how I have spent most of it literally in a deep pit I've carefully excavated (1.5 meters to be precise). I've also had to explain how archaeology is less about finding gold statues and more about comparing the colour and composition of mud... not to mention how archaeology definitely isn't the same as architecture! Being slightly younger than the rest of the team (by several decades) has also led to peculiar glances on Open Days – I can only assume people think I'm a visitor's stray child who's gone rogue on the site. While I may be the odd ball of the group there is nothing I would change about the wonderful people I've worked alongside – and I think the average age of the group has qualified me in palaeontology aswell!

When I started at Druce Farm in 2014 one of my primary roles was to check the spoil heaps with my metal detector – my understanding of the hobby and my ownership of the correct equipment cemented this as central to my reputation on the site. Over the summers, I feel this has changed. While I was the metal detectorist with a trowel, I am now the archaeologist with a metal detector. I want to say how grateful I am to Lilian, Andrew, Carol and all of my surrogate grandparents for my inclusion into the dig alongside the incredible help I've been given over the years.



Finn drawing a section of the pit

As of the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, I will begin my BSc in Archaeology at UCL which I'm delighted with – not only has the Druce experience helped me get to this position in the form of my CV and reference, but I have learnt valuable skills of the archaeological process that will undoubtedly give me a head start and confidence come the end of September.

Thank you EDAS.

**Finn**

## From the Chair

A slight change of format to give pride of place to Finn's insightful and humorous article about his new found interest in palaeontology and how working on an EDAS excavation didn't hinder him too much as he starts an **BSc Archaeology course at UCL**. We wish him well and look forward to hearing about his adventures..... in archaeology.

Alan Dedden has written up the first lecture of the new season about water meadows, which was enthusiastically received by members on the night.

In our quest to provide more information about archaeology to members and the local community Alan has started a new item where he lists articles that he has found online and we hope will be of general interest.

Judith Purssell has written about the Roman site of Vagniacae and an intriguing piece of samian pottery she found.

Geoff Taylor takes us back to Georgia when he was working on an archaeological excavation at Archaeopolis, a Roman/Byzantine town of ancient Colchis.

Don't forget the walk round Wimborne on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2017 when David Reeve will expose the town as it was in the seventeenth century. When it was dirty, smelly and bawdy.

There is also a piece on metal detecting and how it has played a critical role in the Druce Farm Roman Villa project.

The **2018 EDAS Field Trip** programme to SE Wales is taking shape. It will be centred on Caerleon and will run from Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June to Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June. It will include Neolithic burial chambers, an important bronze age upland landscape, hillforts of the Iron Age Silures tribe, invasion by the Romans, Welsh saints and feuding princes, yet more invasions by the Saxons and Normans, repeated revolts, betrayal and despair, industrial exploitation and male voice choirs...who could ask for more?

If interested please contact Geoff Taylor [geoffnsue@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:geoffnsue@hotmail.co.uk) or Andrew Morgan [andrewmorgz@aol.com](mailto:andrewmorgz@aol.com) who are organising next year's trip.

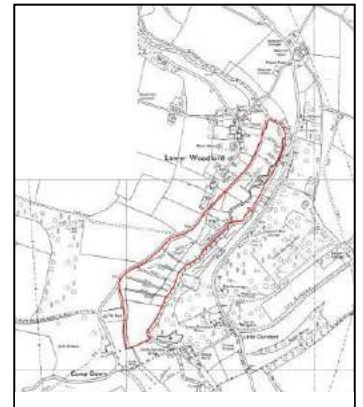
# EDAS Lecture: The Watermeadows of Wessex - Their History, Technology and Future with Michael Heaton

The first lecture of the new season was given by Michael Heaton on "The Watermeadows of Wessex" - and a very entertaining and thought provoking evening resulted, including lively question and answer sessions at the break and the end of the evening. Michael is a practising archaeologist with particular interests in architectural heritage. He also has a passionate interest in watermeadows as a result of his love of fly fishing on the chalk streams of Wessex. His fly fishing exploits led him to - literally - stumble on the remnants of watermeadow systems along these streams.

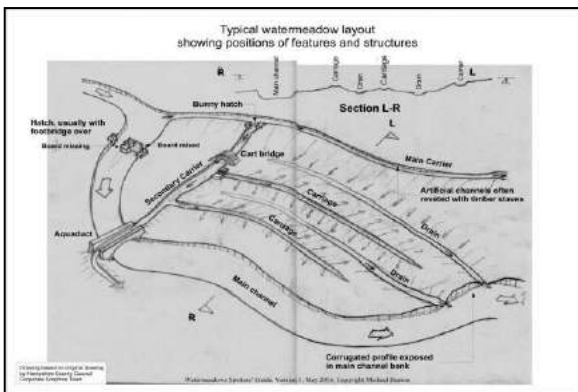
Initial research into the subject very quickly found the work of three people to whom Michael very readily acknowledges a huge indebtedness - Dr Hadrian Cook, Dr Kathy Stearne and Mr Michael Cowan. In this subject, their work laid substantial foundations for others to build on and be measured against.

So what are watermeadows? What they are NOT are fields adjacent to rivers that flood in times of heavy rainfall. This is unmanaged and results in largely stagnant water flooding the field until the water level subsides. Although this can have some beneficial effects, it is neither regular nor certain. A watermeadow is a managed means of increasing the grass yield by a factor of five. It does this by creating a flow of warmer water through the grass during winter and spring. In a healthy river system the water will be well oxygenated and it is the combination of this with the warm flow that generates the growth.

The purpose of generating increased yield may seem obvious - to feed livestock. However, it was not quite as simple as that. The true purpose was to fertilise the hill tops. This was achieved by allowing sheep to graze the watermeadows during the day, and driving them up to the hilltops in the evening so that they fertilised them overnight. The next morning they were brought back down to the watermeadow to repeat the process until that meadow was exhausted. This cycle did not happen while the meadow was flowing with water, but once the grass had grown sufficiently and dried and the flow had been diverted to another meadow. The map of Lower Woodford shows a sequence of watermeadows in the area ringed in red. These are flooded (or "floated") in turn, requiring coordination up and down the river where different farms are involved.



Woodford Valley Watermeadows



There is a significant degree of engineering in creating a working watermeadow. The sketch shows key elements. The river level is raised by a "main hatch" to divert some of the flow into the various channels. The first of these is the main "carrier". More hatches (called "bunny hatches") control flows into secondary carriers, and then into the "carriages". From these the water overflows along their length into the grass and is collected by the drains. It is important that the water flows at the right pace. This requires precise engineering of the carriers and carriages - the fall must be accurate to generate the right flow - and nobody now knows how this was done.

The date of the first watermeadows is not clear, but is thought to be around 1600, but could be as early as 1540. Rowland Vaughan is credited with the invention of watermeadows, but this probably stems from his publication of a book on the subject in 1610. It is likely that this was founded on existing work by others, but he did codify them. They were the internet of their age and many people took advantage of this and jumped onto the bandwagon by setting themselves up as builders or designers, or possibly in this case, as their inventor. They continued to be built into the



Watermeadow channels

early 19th C and collectively formed the largest works of civil engineering in the pre-modern world. Approximately half the length of the River Wylde is now in artificial channels.

Many systems required clay to be brought into the area to line the channels, showing a significant investment in labour. They spread across southern England from Dorset, east to West Sussex and north to the Wash until every river in that area was populated with watermeadows. From around 1875 - following the great depression - their use declined and ended after World War 2. There are now only two watermeadows in operation at Britford south of Salisbury and Lower Woodford (both can be seen clearly on the satellite view on Google Maps). There is another system at Harnham that has regular demonstrations (go to their website for dates - <http://www.salisburywatermeadows.org.uk/index.htm>).



Watermeadows in Woodford Valley

The "bedworks" systems (the watermeadow infrastructure) were unique to England. It is an urban myth that engineers from the Low Countries were instrumental in their inception. They were involved in draining the fens, but there is no evidence they were involved in watermeadows. This myth may have been perpetuated by "Dutch" appearing on some of the structures on systems around Warminster, but this refers to a Warminster watermeadow engineer of the late 16th/early 18th C whose name was Dutch!

Aerial photography has provide us with a means of identifying many watermeadow sites and these sites contain many in situ artefacts including hatches, bridges to carry cart tracks over the channels, sawn wood used to line the banks of the channels and aqueducts to carry channels across the main stream. Other sources include early Ordnance Survey maps, church commissioner's surveys and estate maps. No archaeology has been carried out on watermeadows and none are protected, but Michael believes these represent ancient monuments that should be identified, surveyed, recorded and scheduled before they disappear. He has started to do this, as can be seen in some of the photos, but there remains a huge amount still to do - many are in unrecorded locations.



Recording in progress

Chalk streams are suffering from "Chalkstream Malaise" resulting in the decline of many of the lifeforms that rely on a healthy river. Michael readily admits that his interest in watermeadows is selfish and sees positive benefits from their operation. If they can be brought back into operation there are definite benefits to the water quality, and hence the many lifeforms that rely on it - not least fish. Chalkstream malaise results from silting, nitrate, phosphorous and other pollutants, fly decline, eutrophication, algal infestation and flood alleviation works. Studies have shown that watermeadows can remove 30 - 80% of waterborne silts, nitrates and phosphates without affecting water temperature or oxygen content. They also disperse peak flows across a wide area to mitigate flooding. The operation could be either automated or remotely controlled by the use of local solar power and electric motors to operate the hatches.



Restoring hatches in Lower Woodford

A landowner in the Woodford valley is carrying out restoration of the watermeadows on his land. Some of the restored hatches are shown and demonstrate that it would be possible with reasonable effort to get many watermeadows back in working order.

The evening concluded with a lively question and answer session, and during this EDAS member John Milner added a direct link to working watermeadows. His father had farmed at Lower Ugford on the western border of Wilton

and operated the watermeadows on the River Nadder up to World War 2. A quite unexpected but delightful adjunct to Michael's presentation.

We thanked Michael for an entertaining and thought provoking evening and wished him well with his efforts to record watermeadows and promote their restoration.

***Alan Dedden***

### **Druce Roman Villa - Site Visit**

Aswell as the well-defined ditches the geophysical survey also featured concentrations of anomalies which we have investigated by opening three large trenches. These have resulted in the discovery in the walls of a Roman building within which is another flint walled structure; we have now also found a well-constructed feature which is likely to be what is referred to as a corn dryer; elsewhere we have discovered a number of possible post holes that are carefully aligned in three parallel rows suggesting a large wooden rectangular building, we await a visit by Tim Darvill to confirm our interpretation.

Although this year the site is not suitable for an Open Day we will offer the opportunity for EDAS members to visit and see our excavations at first hand. We have many ditch sections and some pits which are quite impressive in themselves and we have the Roman building and a possible orchard to show you.

We are able to offer EDAS members a visit on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October and Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October at 11am and 2,00pm.

Due to the awkward nature of the site we have to carefully manage the visits and we will cater for parties of 24 and take them round in smaller groups of six people.

The visit will be approximately 1 hour on site with another 20/30minutes walk to and from the car park. We will try and cater for everybody who wants to visit and set aside several days if the numbers warrant it.

For information we will also arrange visits for members of the Puddletown community and other societies.

If you are interested please contact me and I will add you to the list:

email: [andrewmorgz@aol.com](mailto:andrewmorgz@aol.com)

Tel: 01202 731162

***Andrew Morgan***

## JUST A PIECE OF POT.....?

There is something satisfying about being in the right place at the right time. Some time ago I was on my way home from work in Dartford when I decided to call in at the recently cleared site on the A2 which had been excavated by Wessex Archaeology. The JCB's had been busy, and their tracks were evident all over the side of the hill. With head down, and eyes sweeping the ground in front of my feet, I proceeded to walk the site and then .....



But first of all, let me describe to you the importance of the site at Springhead, known as Vagniacae. In their write-up on the excavation Wessex Archaeology say that Springhead in Kent was Wessex Archaeology's longest-running and most prolific excavation. Around 30 archaeologists spent more than two years working at the site, finding more than 150,000 objects, ranging from axe heads dating to 300,000BC to a small hoard of medieval silver pennies. The site was described as "an archaeologist's dream". What a shame it was that they refused all requests from Gravesend Historical Society to assist, or just be informed of what was going on, and members were almost forcibly removed when they visited the site.

By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD Vagniacae had a population of 1,000-2,000 and its central area was about 37 acres. Around the sacred pool was a walled sanctuary containing one or two shrines or temples, a large tree, a tank or bath, a small booth for baking bread, and several sacrificial pits where dead animals and pottery were placed. Around the pool were platforms probably for visitors to view the sacred pool. Near the southern end of the pool was a possibly a guest house where pilgrims were housed. Strewn on the floors of some of Vagniacis's temples were votive offerings and religious paraphernalia, including a ceramic figurine of a goddess and a stone altar.

The Wessex excavation took place on the eastern side of the A2, a short distance from Northfleet. On the other side of the road were fields and a disused railway embankment. Gravesend Historical Society had been digging here for years, and I took part in the dig, under the direction of Sid Harker. The town had been occupied over a period of 400 years, and was a staging post between Dover and London. It had been a busy town, with troops and traders passing through. One find was spectacular and, for me, very frustrating. I had been working in a trench for two days, but took the next day off. Somebody else took over, and – you guessed it – found the ten mint condition gold coins. They were bought by the Ashmoleum Museum.

Undaunted, I continued to volunteer, and processed several baby skeletons (mostly with tears in my eyes!), and a bronze coin which, in itself, was not exceptional, but was – according to Sid – the first example that had been found in Britain. That went to the British Museum, and was whisked away so fast, I didn't get to record the details of what it was. We found an exquisite small enamelled brooch in the shape of a duck, and at the side of a beautifully metallated road of even sized pebbles, a horse skull which had a nail driven through the front of its head. Possibly the poor animal had been injured on the road (broken leg?), and put out of its misery.

So there I was, years later, straining my eyes in the late afternoon light. Occasionally you register something which you don't realise you have seen, but a voice in your head says **"There! Look again!"** In the tracks of a JCB, a piece of orange pottery was glaring out at me. Having nothing better to hand, I carefully teased it out of the soil with my car key. As I scraped away the dry soil, the piece became bigger and bigger, and I realised I was looking at the inside base of a pot, on which I could see a stamp – **PRID-FEC**. I continued scraping, getting more and more excited, but my degree of excitement was nothing to the pitch it reached when, pulling the piece from the soil, I saw a name scratched on the base – **KABURRIO**. It was close to the sacred pool area and was, I believe, a votive offering.

The first person I contacted was a gentleman at Gravesend Historical Society, who was our resident "Samian" expert. He sent a picture to Guy de la Bédoyère. Guy said that it was first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Samian, made in SW France, and at his suggestion I then sent a picture of it to Roger Tomlin, who was a specialist in Romano-British names at Oxford. He studied the name on the base and said that they had seen parts of the name in graffiti, but had not seen the whole name before.

My find languished in a glass cabinet until I took it to the Bournemouth University Durotriges Big Dig and, with the encouragement of the EDAS members who saw it, am sharing it with you.

**Judith Pursell**

## View from Above No 3: Eggardon Hillfort

Eggardon is a stunning multivallate hillfort sitting on the edge of a chalk escarpment north of the A35 running from Dorchester to Bridport. Its asymmetrical shape follows the contours of the chalk ridge. It stands at 252 metres above sea level and offers panoramic views across the county.



*Photo by Sue Newman and Jo Crane*

There have been small excavations on the site which discovered earlier field boundary ditches and pottery from the middle Bronze Age period. There is no precise evidence for when the hillfort was constructed or later abandoned, but some pits were excavated revealing middle to late Iron Age pottery. There is evidence of several construction phases. It covers an area of 21 ha and contains a number of circular depressions measuring 3-5 metres in diameter; presumably the footprint of round houses. It also contains two Bronze Age bowl barrows of which there are many nearby. The area is covered in prehistoric field systems and barrows and the Dorchester to Exeter Roman Road is located a short distance to the south. The hillfort dominates the local landscape and it is recorded in the Domesday Book.

The notorious smuggler Isaac Gulliver (1745-1822), who lies buried in Wimborne Minster, owned nearby Eggardon Hill Farm and is reputed to have planted a copse of trees on the hill as a navigation aid for his ships. The remains of an octagonal earthwork built to protect the trees is still visible today and features on the OS map.

**Andrew Morgan**

## Working with Responsible Metal Detectorists

Like them or not, metal detectorists are here to stay; the challenge is how to control their activities. The kit is available at increasingly low cost and many people see it as an easy introduction into what they consider to be the best part of archaeology; finding treasure. But of course archaeology is about so much more; the value of an item is immeasurably increased when examined with knowledge of its context and its provenance. This is well understood by all serious metal detectorists and many now respect the procedures they should follow and act in a responsible manner. Unfortunately some detectorists ignore this in their relentless drive to dig up stuff. Such people damage our cultural heritage, and there is no excuse for irresponsible or illegal behaviour and I suggest those guilty should be publically pilloried; albeit in a sensitive manner. In the past many of us have been inclined to paint all metal detectorists as irresponsible but I'd like to take the opportunity to consider our experiences on the Druce Roman Villa Project and recognise the positive, and in this case critical, role of responsible metal detectorists.

The project was actually initiated after EDAS member Ken Wheatley, with the Stour Valley Search and Recovery Club, had detected the fields of Druce Farm with permission of the landowners Ann and Tom Ridout. They found metallic objects and plenty of building material indicative of a Roman Villa site. After informing Lilian Ladle this eventually led to EDAS undertaking a careful evaluation of the site and a full scale excavation. It must be pointed out that once we had determined the condition and extent of the villa the landowner removed the area from cultivation. The following year the tenant farmer deep ploughed the remainder of the field; this would have resulted in extensive damage to the remaining villa buildings if the area had not been protected. So thank you Ken Wheatley.

Whilst we have been working on the villa we have continued to use metal detectorists in a controlled manner to support us with the work. This year we are delighted to have Karen Brown and Peter Adcock on site one day each week. Their primary responsibility is to check the spoil heaps but they also investigate areas outside our trenches and wherever else they are asked to help. They work under our control in a very organised and professional manner and they have proven to be very useful. They have not only located a number of finds but they have also identified concentrations and possible alignments of iron objects (mainly nails), in fact they have found a large quantity of iron nails for us.



Karen and Peter sweeping a spoil heap

Karen studied archaeology at college and has taken an active part in several archaeological societies, and has worked alongside archaeologists on important sites. Preserving our past is her passion. She reminds us that modern industrial agricultural methods are very destructive with deep ploughing, use of harsh chemicals and modern building techniques. She is adamant that 'leaving it in the soil' is not a sensible option. If not struck by the plough, most bronze artefacts, once exposed to the air, will develop bronze disease which will totally destroy them.

Karen believes that in the past the archaeological community was brain washed into thinking that all detectorists were ignorant and borderline criminals. She is a keen advocate for the responsible detectorist and believes that most are as passionate about preserving the past for future generations as archaeologists. Some have a wealth of knowledge of metal artefacts and their conservation. Many donate objects to museums, without charge. On site a detectorist can cover large areas and complement the results of a geophysical survey and on occasion help the archaeologists decide where to put their trenches. A detector will also find small artefacts that could easily be missed in certain soil conditions. She points out that as with the Druce Farm Roman Villa the detectorist is often responsible for identifying a new site and reporting it to the authorities.

But perhaps the most persuasive fact is that the majority of new finds being presented to museums through the Portable Antiquities Scheme are from metal detectorists. A curator with the National Museum Wales states "...we have seen a year-on-year rise in precious items reported, such as Bronze Age and mediaeval artefacts. **About 90% of artefacts are found by metal detectorists.**" The activity is supported by the British Museum which manages the Portable Antiquities Scheme and is now recording and identifying thousands of finds every year.



Nevertheless there is no denying that there are a number of irresponsible people who have gained metal detectorists a bad reputation. Karen has been detecting for 15 years and concludes that much of the problem is due to ignorance; people are not being advised about the rules and regulations relating to detecting. She advocates that all purchasers should be advised to read and sign up to a code of practice and apply for a permit. Up until recently there was a 'Crown Estates Foreshore Permit,' that did just this. All metals detectorist should also be encouraged to join the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

We agree that nighthawks and all illegal and irresponsible activities should be treated severely, and responsible detectorists, farmers and landowners should be encouraged to report them to the police and appropriate punishment..... and we know what I have in mind! Karen warns that driving the detectorist underground would result in the loss of valuable artefacts and that the present system means we all benefit from thousands of objects being handed in and recorded in a responsible fashion.

In conclusion there is no doubt that there is a positive role for responsible detectorists and they can provide very useful support to archaeologists. Everyone who purchases such equipment should be made to read/look at the rules and regulations, and attend a training course run by Karen. Acquiring a metal detector does not make you an archaeologist although I recognise that as with Finn (see page 1) his passion for archaeology evolved from his hobby of metal detecting. Next April Tim Schadla-Hall will tell us that the only true discoverer of the past is the pick and shovel!

**Andrew Morgan**

EDAS Members are invited to:

## **The first Annual Pitt River Lecture "Pitt Rivers: Pioneer"**

**By Professor Richard Bradley (Reading University)**

**On 31 October 2017 at 7.00pm**

In the Fusion Building, Talbot Campus, Bournemouth University BH12 5BB at 7:00pm  
(Displays and welcome reception from 6:30pm).

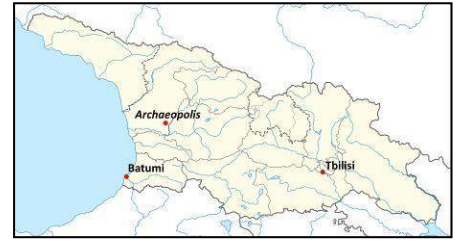
This is a free public lecture, but please book your place by visiting the dedicated Eventbrite page at:  
<https://pittriverslecture.eventbrite.co.uk>

The first Annual Pitt Rivers lecture launches the celebration of 50 years of archaeological and anthropological teaching and research at Bournemouth University and its predecessor intuitions, and has been organized by staff and students connected to the Centre for Archaeology and Anthropology  
(<https://research.bournemouth.ac.uk/centre/archaeology-and-anthropology-group>)

**Professor Timothy Darvill OBE**

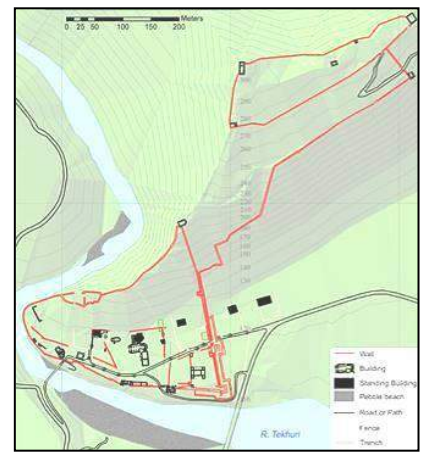
## Georgia and Nokalakevi, August 2005 – Part 2

In the previous article I told of Georgia's long and often turbulent history, not least the conflicts after leaving the Soviet Union in 1991. The village of Nokalakevi, or "ruins where a town was", preserves the remains of *Archaeopolis*, an important centre of ancient *Colchis* and of Roman/Byzantine *Lazica* up to the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. It was involved in many of the region's wars over the centuries, with the Byzantine historian Procopius providing a long description of its central role in defeating a Persian army aiming to conquer *Lazica* in 551 AD. A historian from Oxford, who visited during my stay, gave us good evidence that a large battle had also taken place a millennium earlier on the nearby Colchian plain.



This article concentrates on the archaeology of *Archaeopolis* and my small part in its excavation as an Archaeology undergraduate and novice excavator in 2005.

The whole fortress covers 20 ha (= 50 acres) with the main remaining stone walls dating from the Byzantine 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, possibly partly on earlier Roman foundations. Beneath them are layers from ancient *Colchis* dating from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC. The site commanded an important crossing of the River Tekhuri on a strategically important east-west route. Set in a loop of the river, low cliffs front the defences of the 'lower town' to the south. A high fortified wall, with parts of 3 phases remaining, connects this to the Byzantine 'upper town' on the east where there are no natural defences. A lower wall climbs the hill to the west, perhaps more to stop people falling off than for defence as it stands over the river gorge. A strong wall over a fairly steep hill defends the 'upper town' at its south, whilst the steep and rugged terrain to the north made the citadel established there almost unassailable. Abandoned after the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the lower town also has remains of a 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century 'princely palace'.



Some walls in the lower town still stand to at least 2 metres but, other than a modern 'dig house', the only complete building is the restored Forty Martyrs Church, now re-roofed with red tiles. It isn't clear when this was originally built as there have been several reconstructions, and the foundations of two basilical churches from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries remain nearby. A small restored church or chapel also still stands in the upper town, with about 4 metres of the original Byzantine walls. A rock cut tunnel, reopened since I was there, leads from inside the lower town to the river. Open to anyone in 2005, the fortress is now fenced off and admission fees charged, as with the now re-opened museum.

Whilst there were excavations here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the first proper work was done in 1930 by a joint German-Georgian team, confirming the identification as *Archaeopolis*. Amongst the finds was a large hoard of gold *solidi* of the Emperor Maurice (AD 584-602). State-sponsored excavations and conservation work took place from 1973 until halted by the conflicts and economic problems after Georgian independence. The 'Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi', of which I was part, resumed excavations in 2001 and continues today ([www.nokalakevi.org](http://www.nokalakevi.org)).



On first arriving some of us made the fairly tough ascent to explore the upper town. Although then rather overgrown, it was clear that the outer walls survived fairly well, and there were good views down to the main walls of the lower town and part of the Colchian plain beyond. I chatted to Becky, who said I should volunteer to join the team in Trench A under her partner, Nick, as there were skeletons in his trench. It sounded exciting, so I did – but first we had to learn to dig, with 5 of us supervised by Nick in cleaning a couple of cm off a 15m square trench near the main gate. It took a few days, we found hardly anything, but we did learn!



Then we were let loose on the skeleton, whose toes had been spotted in 2004 – interesting and exciting, especially when we found the legs in a sideways crouch and apparently held down by large rocks. That was the cue for lots of stories based on a hasty burial in a grave that was too small, and many more when we realised there was a second skeleton buried similarly next to the first. Obviously they were star-crossed lovers, with many variations, especially when it was shown that these were actually two young men. A third skeleton nearby made for more speculation, but turned out to be a fairly old lady. Although thought to be Roman or Byzantine, later work has shown that these burials are simply part of a Hellenistic 3<sup>rd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> century BC cemetery, some graves having dateable grave goods unlike our 3.



What had been exciting became less so with slow and careful excavation in awkward positions under a blazing sun (well into the 30s C most days), then more awkward positions for careful drawings, first of the positions of the rocks and then of the skeletons themselves. We also had two massive thunderstorms and downpours; the Caucasus ranges presumably channel these along the centre of Georgia. Our trench became a swimming pool each time, so had to be cleaned back again after baling the water out. At least it was cooler for a while, though we did have shade from the massive eastern wall until about 11am.

Because of the heat, we started digging at 7am, after a small breakfast, then had the main breakfast (brunch?) at 10:00. After working from 10:30 to 2:00, when it became too hot to dig, there was time for a swim in the river before 'lunch' at 3. The afternoon, before dinner at 8:00, was often taken up with finds processing or lectures and discussions on the history of the site or archaeological techniques. It wasn't all work by any means as many afternoons were free, but it was invaluable to put into practice what we'd been taught in the classroom. We also learnt that excavation work isn't always exciting, though it's always interesting, and you never know what's going to come up next. The most shocking thing to me, though obvious in retrospect, came after days of digging, cleaning, drawing, planning and photographing, when our bone specialist had 2 skeletons bagged and gone in 20 minutes.



Trench B, near to the church, actually turned out to be more interesting in 2005, with more finds, a carbonised beam from a Hellenistic period building and a couple of skeletons that were later found to be part of a largely Christian cemetery. Since then the stone bases of Hellenistic buildings have also been found in Trench A, with further finds in new trenches. It appears that Colchian *Archaeopolis* was limited to the 'lower town' and went through several long periods both of occupation and abandonment. Before that, there is evidence of occupation in the Chalcolithic (c.4,000 BC) and more extensive evidence from earlier Bronze Age settlement (c. 2,500 BC). The Hellenistic period buildings had a stone base laid on the ground, on which wooden beams carried wattle and daub walls. There is little sign of any clearly Roman occupation, which is strongly represented near the Black Sea, and most of what remains visible are the stone walls of 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine occupation and fortification. After the Arab conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, it seems that the site was abandoned for almost a thousand years, after which the lower town was occupied for a couple of centuries by the local ruling family.

Writing this has made me think I really should volunteer to go back again and catch up with the people, both English and Georgian, who are still involved with the expedition. Watch this space.

**Geoff Taylor**



## FINDS ON THE INTERNET compiled by Alan Dedden

This is the first of what I hope will be many such sections in future newsletters. It is a compilation of recent internet posts that I think members might find interesting. It is not exhaustive, just those I happen to come across. However I am happy for members to email me at [alan.dedden@gmail.com](mailto:alan.dedden@gmail.com) with any they find as I might miss them.

### Roman Villa at Boxford, Berks

<http://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/mosaic-find-helps-piece-together-uks-roman-past/ar-AAr7D0p?li=AAmiR2Z&ocid=spartanntp>

Described by Anthony Beeson as containing "the most exciting mosaic discovery in Britain in the last 50 years".

### The Oldest Known Wine?

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/aug/30/traces-of-6000-year-old-wine-discovered-in-sicilian-cave>

It was previously believed that winemaking began in Italy around 1200 BC, but this find pushes that date back to around 6000 BC. Incidentally, look at the size and condition of the complete 6000 BC storage jars!

### Earliest Europeans?

<https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/news/2017-09-01/bu-research-unearts-6-million-year-old-human-footprints-crete>

This find on Crete - by a team including Bournemouth University - could rewrite the whole story of human development and migration out of Africa. It is fossil footprints that are 5.7 million years old and suggests that our early ancestors were in Europe as well as Africa.

### Not So Many Wonderful Things, But It Is Another Egyptian Tomb at Luxor

<http://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/egypt-announces-discovery-of-3500-year-old-tomb-in-luxor/ar-AArxlsJ?li=BB0PWjQ>

This is the tomb of a royal goldsmith of the 18th dynasty.

### Vindolanda Delivers Yet More Astonishing Finds

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/sep/09/hadrians-wall-lost-secrets-roman-vindolanda-unearted>

Unexpected find of rapidly abandoned early cavalry barracks, including very well preserved artefacts.

### Medieval Coin Hoard

<http://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/english-school-caretaker-discovers-medieval-coin-hoard-buried-in-playground/ar-AArQw9h?li=AAmiR2Z&ocid=spartandhp>

128 silver coins found in a school playground using a self-built metal detector (with permission). Dating from the 15th and early 16th C, and found in school grounds near Warkwoth Castle, their story is of course unknown, but theories abound.

### Another Hoard, This Time Viking Gold

<http://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/gold-diggers-buried-treasure-shows-vikings-hoarded-precious-metals/ar-AArQCWw?li=AAmiR2Z&ocid=spartandhp>

Dating from 970 or earlier, this find is of an unprecedented amount of gold (approximately 3 lb) in a Viking context.

### Buildings At Risk

<http://www.msn.com/en-gb/money/personalfinance/endedangered-buildings-including-chapels-factories-and-pubs-featured-in-most-at-risk-list/ar-AArQ8m7?li=AA9SkIr&ocid=spartandhp>

This is a list of buildings considered most at risk by the Victorian Society.

### Roman Coin Hoard in Cornwall

[http://www.cornwalllive.com/news/cornwall-news/treasure-hunting-pair-unearted-nearly-367139?utm\\_campaign=8540268\\_Sept%20newsletter%20%2813%29&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=CBA&dm\\_i=1OVB,531PO,FZBABW,JOSTN,1](http://www.cornwalllive.com/news/cornwall-news/treasure-hunting-pair-unearted-nearly-367139?utm_campaign=8540268_Sept%20newsletter%20%2813%29&utm_medium=email&utm_source=CBA&dm_i=1OVB,531PO,FZBABW,JOSTN,1)

Nearly 2000 coins in a hoard buried around the late 3rd C. Found by metal detectorists in a recently ploughed field.

## Just Another Mastadon?

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2017/sep/13/how-a-newly-discovered-mastodon-jaw-became-a-mammoth-mystery>

Fossil jaw from the Gay Site in Tennessee that apparently does not fit known species.

### EDAS Visit

#### **Street Life of Seventeenth Century Wimborne Minster" led by Dr David Reeve**

**8<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

**Meet 10.15 for a 10.30 start**

**Wimborne Minster Churchyard**

EDAS is always eager to welcome Dr David Reeve back to Dorset to lead a walk around Wimborne. This walk will be based around his PhD study of the town and focus on aspects of town life at a time of great political and religious upheaval. The town as we know it is very different from the sights, sounds (and smells!) of the early modern period. We will get to walk manorial boundaries, learn about how the town was organised, what people did, what they believed in and even hear stories of ordinary Wimborne folk in their own words as they went about their daily lives.

The walk takes place on Sunday 8th October; meet at Wimborne Minster churchyard 10.15am for a 10:30am start, on the corner opposite the Priest House Museum and on the site of Widow Darby's house for those who remember where that is!! The walk will be a gentle stroll around the core of the town and should finish by 12:30pm

***David Reeve***

## EDAS PROGRAMME 2017-2018

Date	Event	Who	Title
Sun 8 Oct 2017	Walk	Dr David Reeve	A walk round Wimborne to explore the features that remain from the 16 <sup>th</sup> century.
Wed 11 Oct 2017	Lecture	Dan Carter	Potting on the heath: in search of the medieval and post medieval East Dorset pottery
Wed 8 Nov 2017	Lecture	Prof David Jaques Universty of Buckingham	Blick Mead Mesolithic site: key to the Stonehenge landscape?
Wed 13 Dec 2017	Lecture	Dr Peter Stanier	Dorset Breweries: malting and brewing
Wed 10 Jan 2018	Lecture	Roger Hills	The landscape of Wimborne in 10 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup> century
Wed 7 Feb 2018	Lecture	Martin Green	New light on the Knowlton complex
Wed 14 Mar 2018	AGM	AGM & Lilian Ladle	AGM followed by Lilian Ladle talk about the 2017 EDAS Field Trip to Hadrian's Wall
Wed 11 April 2018	Lecture at BU	Tim Schadla-Hall UCL	<b>"The pick and the shovel is the only true discoverer of the past."</b> <i>Our annual lecture hosted by the BU students' Archaeology, History and Anthropology Society</i>
Wed 9 May 2018	Lecture	Dr Robert Bewley	Endangered archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa.

**Note:** unless otherwise stated all lectures are from 7.30 – 9.30 pm and are held at **St Catherine's Church Hall, Lewens Lane, Wimborne, BH21 1LE.**

<http://www.dorset-archaeology.org.uk/>

## DISTRICT DIARY

This is a diary on interesting events held in the area. We cannot be held responsible for the arrangements so please check on the associated web-sites.

Date	Event	Group	Who	Title
Fri 6th Oct 7.30pm	Lecture	DNHAS	Dr David Parham	Shipwrecks of the Bronze Age
Tues 10th Oct 7.30pm	Lecture	Shaftesbury	Prof David Jaques Buckingham University	Blick Mead Mesolithic site – the starting-point of Stonehenge?
Tues 31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 7.00pm	Lecture	BUni	Prof Richard Bradley	"Pitt Rivers: Pioneer" in the Fusion Building, Talbot Campus, Bournemouth University BH12 5BB at 7:00pm. Book your place by visiting the dedicated Eventbrite page at: <a href="https://pittriverslecture.eventbrite.co.uk">https://pittriverslecture.eventbrite.co.uk</a> < <a href="https://pittriverslecture.eventbrite.co.uk/">https://pittriverslecture.eventbrite.co.uk/</a>
Fri 3 <sup>rd</sup> Nov 7.30pm	Lecture	DNHAS	Prof Tim Darvill	Sticks and stones and broken bones – first monuments along northwest Europe Atlantic coastlands
Tues 14th Nov 7.30pm	Lecture	Shaftesbury	Dr Nicola Snashall of National Trust,	Avebury - recent excavations and new discoveries
Fri 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec 7.30pm	Lecture	DNHAS	Prof Richard Bradley	The land and sea 4000-600BC
Tues 12th Dec 7.30pm	Members evening	Shaftesbury	Members	Mince pies and short talks on recently-visited historical sites, plus seasonal quiz, wine & mince pies.
Fri 2nd Feb 2018 7.30pm	Lecture	DNHAS	Kath Walker	Jade Axes
Fri 2 <sup>nd</sup> Mar 2018 7.30pm	Lecture	DNHAS	Dr Catriona Gibson	Bronze Age connections between Iberia and British Isles

### **BNSS: Bournemouth Natural Sciences Society**

- Events held at 39 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BN1 3NS.
- <http://bnss.org.uk/>

### **BU AHAS: Bournemouth University Archaeology, History and Anthropology Society**

- Events held on different days and different times
- Events usually held at Talbot Campus, Bournemouth in Kimmeridge House room KG03 on Talbot Campus.

### **CAA: Centre for Archaeology and Anthropology: Seminars and Research Centre Meetings**

- Events usually held at Talbot Campus, Bournemouth in Kimmeridge House room F111 on Talbot Campus.

### **Dorset Humanists**

- **Event held at Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW. .**

### **DNHAS: Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society**

- Events held at Dorset County Museum
- <http://www.dorsetcountymuseum.org/events>

### **Shaftesbury & District Archaeology Group:**

- St Peters Hall, Gold Hill, Shaftesbury.

### **Wareham: Wareham and District Archaeology and Local History Society**

- Meetings are at 7.30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, unless otherwise indicated.
- The venue is Wareham Town Hall (on the corner of North Street and East Street).
- <http://wareham-archaeology.co.uk/>