

East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER – January 2020

Editor's Notes

WELCOME TO A BRAND NEW YEAR, OR RATHER DECADE.

Thank you to Andrew for the summary of **Miles Russells' presentation** last month. The new decade, and the **EDAS 8th January Meeting**, brings Monique Goodliffe to talk on *The Aristocrat and the Ironmaster*, a look at the links between Wimborne and iron production in South Wales.

A couple of reminders about the EDAS Programme below:

- Our **12th February presentation** with Prof. Josh Pollard will be at Bournemouth University; details of the exact location will follow.
- The **1st April presentation** has changed and will now be about the Mayan civilisation (this isn't, of course, on the second Wednesday of the month as the hall isn't available then).

To any non-members reading this: visitors are always welcome. We don't charge, though obviously appreciate any donation people wish to make.

I mentioned **The Christchurch Antiquarians** (TCA) in the last newsletter, now included in the list of archaeology societies near the end. There's a short article about them, and about the possible **Sopley long barrow**, from Mike Tizzard – chairman of TCA and, of course, one of our members.

As here, **past newsletters** are often referred to; you can find them on the website, if you don't keep copies, at <http://www.dorset-archaeology.org.uk/newsletters.html>.

View from Above has its 24th outing, based on Sue Newman and Jo Crane's revealing aerial photograph of West Kennet Long Barrow.

Weblinks and Highlights: Another in the continuing series, with many thanks to Alan Dedden. The highlight piece really reminds us to be critical of news reports, especially those that seem sensational or too good to be true. Of course, this is exactly the same attitude we should take to archaeological reports that seem too certain – can we see the evidence and are the conclusions justified by it?

Alan has also provided a short piece recounting an **email received from Arizona**, with a link to a blog on archaeology in the south-western United States. Archaeology on sites and buildings that are probably younger than those some of us live in has its own fascination, and it's obviously interesting to read about the archaeology of pre-Columbian America.

If you're a non-member reading this, I'd be interested to hear from you as to how you received or found our newsletter and, of course, what you liked or didn't like.

A couple of editions ago I mentioned a problem on connecting to some of the websites in the newsletter, but thought I had solved it as no-one came back to me. However, I recently heard from someone that the problem persisted and have now found that it's caused by the conversion to Adobe pdf, though I've found a work-around that seems to avoid the issue. Do let me know if you have any problems with this, or if you'd like corrected versions of the last few weblinks.

There's also the first of a new occasional series of short items looking at **Roman epitaphs** in Italy. **Perhaps you can provide something to counter my tendency towards writing about the Romans?**

There are three 'posters' towards the end. One is for an **Open Day** at Cranborne Chase AoNB's new offices, another for a **Foraging Course** run from the Ancient Technology Centre in Cranborne and the third for an illustrated talk in Blandford on **our fossil ancestors**. I can recommend the foraging if this is an area that interests you, as I went on the first course a couple of months ago.

Archaeologists digging in a pyramid in Egypt have found a mummy covered in chocolate and hazelnuts. They believe it to be the long lost Pharaoh Rocher.

Arthur and the Kings of Britain: An Archaeology of Myth Fulfilment by Miles Russell

For our final lecture of the decade we were delighted to welcome Dr Miles Russell, senior lecturer of archaeology at Bournemouth University. He gave an insight into the legend of King Arthur, the Romano-British leader who fought against the Anglo-Saxon invasion in the late 5th and early 6th centuries. As with all legends their stories grow with time; the Arthur we know today is a complex figure whose legend has evolved over 1500 years. Miles explained that the Arthurian legend is not pure invention, but rather a compilation of real events and real people collated with a degree of imagination and some romance.

The post-Roman period from which Arthur emerges is complex and traumatic; significant events would have been written down and copied by literate monks. They were also captured by British bards, as they had done from the beginning of time, to be shared orally and passed down through the generations. The written evidence that remains from the early medieval period is quite limited and usually treated with some scepticism, but Miles suggests that many of the events can be substantiated by the historic and archaeological record.



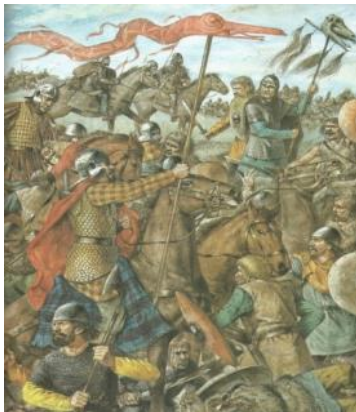
One of the most important texts is the ***De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*** (On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain), written by the Welsh monk Gildas in about 540. It is a rather despondent polemic explaining the devastating invasion of the Anglo-Saxons as God's punishment on the ungodly Britons: "*The townships and high wall are abandoned, once again the citizens are put to flight...they are pursued by the enemy.... the pitiful citizens are torn to pieces by their foes like lambs by butchers*". It contains no reliable dates or place names, but it is very important because Gildas was an eyewitness to these eventful times. All the characters mentioned in the book, whether kings or clerics, are heavily criticised for their un-Christian behaviour, with the exception of the British war leader Ambrosius Aurelianus (later also called Aurelius Ambrosius), who is grandly clothed in purple suggesting a link to Imperial Rome. He leads the Britons in their definitive battle against the Saxons at Mons Badonicus. It should be noted that when Bede wrote the ***Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*** (An

Ecclesiastical History of the English People), completed in about 731, although writing from the opposite perspective he included large sections copied verbatim from Gildas. This demonstrates the importance placed on the written word, and Miles explained that copying was a sign of respect rather than pure plagiarism.

The first mention of Arthur is found in the ***Historium Brittonum*** (The History of the Britons), dated to the early 9th century and attributed to a Welsh monk called Nennius. This is a compilation of material from a large variety of sources; it includes tales of folklore, chronicles, dynastic tables and bardic poems of legend and superstition. Much appears to have been drawn from tales passed down orally. It provides a history of the Britons from origins under Brutus, a refugee from Troy, describes in some detail the battles fought by the powerful Catuvellauni and Trinovantes tribes during the Roman invasions led by Julius Caesar and covers the complex politics of post-Roman Britain. Nennius refers to Arthur as *Dux Bellorum* (war leader) and lists twelve great battles between the Britons and the Saxons: “Arthur carried an image of the Holy Virgin Mary on his shoulders and the pagans were put to flight that day, and there was great slaughter of them”.

Arthur is also mentioned in the ***Annales Cambriae*** (The Annals of Wales), written in a form of Welsh indicating they were prepared in the early 10th century. He also features in the ***Mabinogion***, a complex work of Welsh prose, from the 12th century in its oldest version but based on works conceived many centuries earlier. A powerful aspect of the Welsh legend was that Arthur had never really died; in Wales he remained an important figure in folklore and myth, his stories kept alive through the oral tradition of storytelling. One day he would return to lead his people against their enemies!

Following their conquest of Saxon England, the Normans were keen to present a revised version of the history of England to legitimise their takeover and enslavement of its people. There are several important histories written in the 12th century, the most impressive by the monk William of Malmesbury who, in 1125, completed his great work ***Gesta Regum Anglorum*** (Deeds of the English Kings), which he readily acknowledged was based on the work of Bede. Another eminent history was prepared by Henry of Huntingdon who published his work ***Historia Anglorum*** (The History of The English) in 1127.



The most influential work was ***Historia Regum Britanniae*** (*History of the Kings of Britain*), completed in 1138 by the Cambro-Norman cleric Geoffrey of Monmouth. Geoffrey gave it a Welsh bias and he made much use of the works of Gildas and Nennius, as well as Bede. He claimed also to have access to another ancient manuscript written in Welsh, although unfortunately not named, and he collected a great deal of information from storytellers.

This book was responsible for an explosion in popularity of the Arthurian legends. Again Arthur is depicted as a heroic war leader, but recognised as a complex character exhibiting the necessary psychopathic tendencies required for battle: “He did not slacken his onslaught until he had dispatched four hundred and seventy men with his sword Caliburn”. As King of Britain, Arthur defeats the Saxons and establishes a vast empire. Geoffrey introduced many features now integral to the Arthurian story, including Arthur's father Uther Pendragon, the magician Merlin, Arthur's wife Guinevere, the sword Excalibur, Arthur's conception at Tintagel and his battle against Mordred at Camlann, after which he is taken to Avalon, his final resting place. The work was very popular and was translated into several languages.

The myth of King Arthur created a powerful hold on the imaginations of medieval aristocracy, especially the Plantagenets who were keen to prove a historical connection in the history of Britain. It retained its historical credence well into the 16th century, Henry VII even naming his first son Arthur in homage to his Welsh ancestry. The French writer Chrétien de Troyes embellished the story, focussing on the Knights of

the Round Table; he added Lancelot and the story of the Quest for the Holy Grail.

Miles explained that many of the myths now associated with Arthur were acquired from other people and other times, collated to create a composite figure. This includes historical facts and myths from the written record and the oral tradition, some emanating from the Late Iron Age, and incorporating details of historical events from the first contact with Rome, as well as the challenges of the post Roman period. Of course, we still continue to use and embellish the stories today.



The presentation of Arthur as a ferocious war leader (*Dux bellorum*) has been taken from the description of Ambrosius Aurelianus as recorded by Gildas. Ambrosius was a war leader of the Romano-British who won the important battle at Mons Badonicus against the Anglo-Saxons in the 5th century. In Geoffrey's *Historia Britanniae*, Ambrosius was transformed into Arthur's uncle, being the brother of Uther Pendragon. Miles suggests that the great romantic element of Arthur's marriage to Guinevere resonates with the story of the wedding of Arvirargus, King of the British tribe the Catuvellauni, to Gwessia, the supposed daughter of the Roman Emperor Claudius. Miles suggests further that Arvirargus corresponds to the historical Caratacus, son of Cunobelinus, who led the resistance to the Roman invasion of 43 AD.

The final part of the Arthurian legend, as described by Geoffrey of Monmouth, explains that Arthur



creates an extensive empire covering the British Isles and Scandinavia before he challenges Rome by taking Gaul. This compares with the actual exploits of Magnus Maximus who was the Roman commander of Britain in the late 4th century. In 383 he was made emperor of the West, covering Britannia and Gaul. To consolidate his position he invaded Gaul and in 388 he moved into Italy to take Rome itself, but was killed in battle. Gildas wrote that he deprived Britain not only of its Roman troops, but also of its "armed bands...governors and of the flower of her youth", who were never to return. However he became an important figure in Welsh tradition, probably because he married Elen, the daughter of a Welsh king, and through their offspring he became founding father of the dynasties of several medieval Welsh kingdoms. He is commemorated as the ancestor of a Welsh king on the Pillar of Eliseg, erected at Valle Crucis nearly 500 years after Magnus left Britain. He also appears in the *Mabinogion* as Macsen Wledig.

In the legend, Arthur returns to England to fight a final battle at Camlann. He is severely wounded by his nephew Mordred and is taken to the island of Avalon for treatment by Morgana. Miles suggests this bears comparison to events that happened immediately before Caesar's second expedition to Britain in 54 BC. Then, Mandubracius was forced to flee to Gaul and the protection of Caesar after his father, the King of the Trinovantes tribe, was killed by his brother Cassivellaunus of the Catuvellauni tribe. Cassivellaunus led the British defence against the Romans but was beaten and Mandubracius was installed as king of the Trinovantes.

Miles finished by looking into another consequence of the legend that he referred to as myth fulfilment. Demonstrating the importance of the legend, numerous attempts have been made over the years to create the evidence to show its authenticity.

Tintagel plays a central role in Geoffrey's version. Uther Pendragon, is driven mad with lust for Ygern, the wife of Baron Gorlois of Cornwall. Gorlois removes his wife to Tintagel Castle, an impregnable stronghold on the coast. The desperate Uther calls for help from Merlin who transforms him into the exact likeness of Gorlois. The ruse is successful, he enters the castle and has his wicked way with Ygern.

and thus Arthur is conceived. Tintagel also features in a second story from the Arthurian legend, about an adulterous affair between the knight Tristan and Iseult, the wife of King Mark of Cornwall. This is similar to the adulterous relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere.

In 1233 Richard, Earl of Cornwall (1209–72), the second son of King John, acquired Tintagel. He was steeped in the romance of the Arthurian legend and he created a landscape to support the story of Arthur's conception and the love story of Tristan and Iseult. He built a medieval castle, which still stands today. To meet aspects of the love story he also built a chapel, a walled garden and the cave through which the lovers escape.



Glastonbury Abbey became one of the richest monasteries in England. It immediately recognised the great commercial opportunities from Geoffrey of Monmouth stating that it was the location of Avalon, where King Arthur was taken to recover from his wounds. There was a concerted effort to locate his remains and the monks of Glastonbury Abbey duly discovered a grave containing the bones, not only of Arthur, but also his wife Guinevere, with a lead cross bearing the inscription: *Hic jacet sepultus inclitus rex Arturius in insula Avalonia* (Here lies entombed the renowned King Arthur in the island of Avalon). The political significance of this was noted by Gerald of Wales who wrote “.... many legends have been invented about King Arthur and his mysterious ending. In their stupidity the British people maintain that he is still alive. Now that the truth is known the fairy-tales have been snuffed out....”. In 1278 the strategically minded Edward I created a new tomb to house the remains, to ensure that Arthur would not be resurrected to help the Welsh against his final onslaught. The tomb was destroyed during the Reformation.



Miles concluded that the medieval histories contain significant demonstrable facts that stretch from the 1st century BC into the medieval period. Certainly much of the information has been massaged and certain characters and events have been re-assigned to different people and times. Much of the information was derived from the oral tradition of heroic tales of the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes tribes of south east England, who were central to the events associated with the Roman invasions. In particular, he stands by the worth of the texts by Nennius and Geoffrey of Monmouth, which are central to the Arthurian legend. However, he concludes that Arthur could not have existed in the form of the legend; he is very much a composite character who probably evolved through the oral tradition and is based primarily on the real hero Ambrosius Aurelianus. His legend has grown by taking other real events and shaping them to create the legend of Arthur and his gallant knights. In the modern world Arthur has become a hero to an international audience, proving that our taste for tall stories is as keen as ever.

We thanked Miles for this most enjoyable romp through the Middle Ages and I recommend his book, which provides a thorough examination of the myths and facts - it is called ***Arthur and The Kings of Britain, the Historical Truth Behind the Myths*** (2018, Amberley Publishing, Stroud).

I was taken by a rather prescient quote from Michael Wood at the front of the book “...it seems to me that among ordinary people the legend has become more important than the history ... ending up far more wonderful than mere historical fact ...”

Andrew Morgan

Web Link Highlight December 2019

The item on the translation of the Tacitus Annals suggesting Elizabeth I was the author caused me to search the various reports for one which actually showed the "handwriting idiosyncrasies" claimed by the researcher. Most media sources simply used the same text and a picture of a page of the translation which had none of the corrections or idiosyncrasies (or none that I could see) ⁽¹⁾. As I think I may have said before, if you are particularly interested in an item, it would pay to search for others on the same subject which may give a better report and/or pictures. Not all media sources are the same, but many take the easy route and simply churn out the press release (or whatever they call it these days).

I suppose any possibility of linking a find to the Ark of the Covenant will be exploited to publicise an excavation (and use the 1981 film to add popular interest). But this item reminded me very much of Miles Russell's December EDAS talk on the evolution of the King Arthur legend (see the write-up above). Take a vaguely remembered (or not well documented) story, add in elements from other similar stories and embellish it to appeal to, or reflect, current idioms. Then, after the changes that will occur over time due to retelling, different emphases and maybe translation errors, you have a new story that only distantly reflects the original seed story. Trying to now discover the real events that lay behind the story will probably be little better than guesswork.

This pattern should come as no surprise as it has long been recognised as the reason for so many similar folk songs appearing to come from widely different places (including the USA). An original event (or imagined event) was retold many times down the generations and spread geographically along the way as people moved away from their homes for reasons of marriage, or for a better life elsewhere. It also happened to the story of Dick Turpin (my 7x great uncle). The facts of his life were greatly embellished, first by Harrison Ainsworth for his 1834 novel *Rookwood* and subsequently by almost everyone else who used his name in a tale of 17th or 18th century highwaymen. This popularisation of Turpin led to many places (mainly, but not only, pubs or inns) claiming some connection with him. Needless to say, in the vast majority of these cases there is little or scant evidence for that connection, including the local legend that he buried a boot full of sovereigns in Harley Wood near Sixpenny Handley.

It is also the case that many churches claimed to have relics of saints when, again, the evidence is sparse or non-existent that the small bone they have in a box is actually from whichever saint. Of course, the reasons were the same – to attract customers to the pubs or pilgrims to the churches. Could this be part of the story for the supposed site of the Ark? It would also be interesting to know if there is any mention of the Ark in the Dead Sea scrolls, as these include 33 (the second highest) relating to Deuteronomy.

Alan Dedden

[(1) I trust that those analysing the writing weren't the same as those who wrote 'emitted' rather than 'omitted' on one of the photographs. Or perhaps they had become used to idiosyncratic Elizabethan spelling. In the vein of Alan's comments, I can't remember the Justinianic plague being stated as the cause of the 'Fall of the Roman Empire' (3rd link) in any of my reading about the Romans. It does seem to have been the cause of multiple burials in single graves – see p.7 of December newsletter. (ed.)]

December Weblinks

Was Elizabeth I The Author Of This Tacitus Translation?

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-7735885/Queen-Elizabeth-translated-Roman-historian-Tacituss-work-Latin-English-spare-time.html>

Habsburg Facial Deformity Linked To Inbreeding

<https://inews.co.uk/news/science/a-royal-facial-deformity-is-linked-to-inbreeding-1329309>

New Research Claims Roman Empire Did Not Fall Because Of The Plague

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/12/02/world/plague-roman-empire-scn/index.html>

Wreck Of Scharnhorst Discovered Off The Falklands

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-50670743>

2000 Year Old Roman Shipwreck Found Off Greek Island

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-7776097/2-000-year-old-Roman-shipwreck-filled-preserved-jugs-discovered.html>

44000 Year Old Cave Art Found In Indonesian Cave

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-50754303>

HMS Invincible Items To Go On Display In Poole

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-dorset-50747903/revolutionary-18th-century-naval-ship-to-go-on-display-in-poole>

Evidence Found In Fossils That Earth Was Already Stressed Before The Dinosaur Extinction

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/earth-dinosaur-extinction-stressed-carbon-dioxide-ocean-acidification-climate-change-a9244461.html>

Human Remains Found During Excavations At The Alamo

<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/12/13/alamo-restoration-turns-up-three-sets-human-remains/2643220001/>

3500 Year Old Single Use Cup Goes On Display At British Museum

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7795861/Disposable-ancient-wine-vessels-designed-used-binned-uncovered-rubbish-tip-excavation.html>

Woman's DNA Recovered From Stone Age "Chewing Gum"

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-50809586>

Bronze Age Royal Tombs Found In Greece

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-50809586>

Homo Erectus Extinction Now Dated To Much Later Than Previously Thought

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-50827603>

3000 Year Old Temple Found In Israel Claimed To Be Home Of The Ark Of The Covenant

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-7810225/Biblical-home-Ark-Covenant-discovered-Israel.html>

World's Oldest Forest At 385 Million Years Old Found In New York State

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/385-million-year-old-fossils-reveal-worlds-oldest-forest-had-modern-tree-roots-180973810/>

Alice Roberts' Midwinter Celebration

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/20/religious-christmas-reasons-scientific-midwinter-solstice>

Climate Change And The 1707 Act Of Union

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7766021/Crop-famine-lead-Scotland-signing-Union-caused-tropical-volcano.html>

Mayan Palace Discovered In Mexico

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/archeologists-discover-ancient-1000-year-21168144>

Unexpected Suggestion For A Weblink

You'll be aware that I welcome suggestions for my weblinks, but when I received a suggestion from the south west USA I was taken by surprise. Homer Thiel emailed to suggest I include a link to the Desert Archaeology Inc blog - the company he works for. I have to confess that, on first receipt, I suspected some sort of scam (strange unexpected email containing a hyperlink starts bells ringing). But after checking that the company mentioned does indeed have a genuine website, I contacted Homer and asked how he came across the EDAS Newsletter. It turns out that he was researching Roman villas and

stumbled on the Newsletter, saw the request for weblink ideas and responded. His company website is <https://desert.com/> but use <https://desert.com/blog> to find the posts about various historic or archaeological subjects. In addition, you can find lectures by Homer on YouTube about his special interest - historic period sites between 1700 and 1920 . There is a large amount of material there, and for those of us brought up on a diet of westerns there are many that will attract attention.

In the blog I came across a post about "Historic Native American Arrow Points In Southern Arizona" and was amazed to read that the native Americans only transitioned from large 'darts' to bows around AD 500. I asked Homer if this was typical for all of America, or just the south west, as evidence of bows here in the UK and across Europe dates to way before that. It turns out that the old saw "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" may apply. The conditions in the south west are not conducive to preservation of wooden artefacts – the caves are not dry enough and there are no wetland areas – so no surviving bows have yet been found. However, they have recently discovered small lithic points which are being analysed for use as arrow points, and these date from what they call the Early Agricultural period, 800 BC to AD 50, so the (known) story may go back a thousand years or more.

I wonder who else is out there reading the EDAS Newsletter?

Alan Dedden

The Christchurch Antiquarians (TCA) & the possible long barrow near Sopley

TCA were founded in 2002, originally as a sub-group of Christchurch Local History Society before breaking away as an independent group. We're quite a small group but, as shown by the website (<https://christchurchantiquarians.wordpress.com/>), quite active in and around Christchurch.

An early focus was on the history of Christchurch Castle, with a good deal of geophysical work done on the site with English Heritage's permission. The picture, from the TCA website, shows the 12th century Norman House (or 'Constable's House') by the castle.



For the last 10 years or so that central focus has, instead, been on exploration of Christchurch's 'Port Mill', where the site was lost until found by the group. A number of pits have been dug to help work out the ground plan, resulting in the discovery of a good deal of the base timbers, which were left in situ. As the site is wet the timbers are in excellent condition, though they're wet because the base of the building is effectively underwater. That has meant that the excavated areas had to be small, so that it was possible to pump the water out to allow any excavation. For the last couple of years TCA have been more focussed on auguring the surrounding garden, though so far that has only resulted in finding another water channel.

A very recent activity has been undertaking a geophysical survey in Drewitt Gardens, with the help of Martin Bates, a well-known professional geophysicist. We will, of course, be interested in whatever can be seen, but the primary purpose is to locate the Saxon defences of Christchurch.

Of course, as reported in the previous newsletter, TCA were also involved with AVAS on the work to locate a possible long barrow near to Sopley. Following the excavation of a trial trench, which showed good stratigraphy, Claire Pinder visited the site a few weeks ago. Claire is the Senior Archaeologist for the Dorset Historic Environment Record and she agreed that the site was that of a long barrow, flattened in building a WW2 airfield. It will, of course, be entered in the HER.

Mike Tizzard

View from Above No 24: West Kennet Long Barrow

*Photo by
Sue Newman
and Jo Crane*



This famous stone-chambered Neolithic long barrow is over 100 metres in length, perhaps the longest example (different reports suggest up to 104m). With sides tapering from a maximum width of 25m and a maximum (surviving) height of 3.2m, it is estimated to have taken around 16,000 man hours to complete. It may have been built in two or more phases as there was a noticeable bulge along the axis and a subtle change in direction. Though now turfed, and with the original side ditches mostly buried by ploughing, its original chalk sides would have been highly visible in the landscape. It was probably once ringed with large stones set intermittently around the base, as shown in John Aubrey's sketch of c.1660.

The barrow dates from c.3,650 BC, although the majority of artefacts known to have been found inside are dated c.3,000-2,600 BC – grave goods such as pottery, beads and stone tools. The partial remains of around 50 people were also found in excavations, as well as many animal bones.

The first excavation was in 1859, although only one of the stone-built chambers was opened, with a rather more scientific one in the mid-1950s. The tomb seems to have been open until about 2,000 BC, after which it was filled with earth and rubble. The forecourt was then blocked with sarsen boulders and a false entrance of twin sarsen uprights erected, with 3 massive sarsens placed across the front of the tomb.

After the latest excavation the site was restored and the façade and chambers at the eastern end reconstructed. It is one of the few long barrows that can be explored internally, along the 13m long central passage and into the 5 burial chambers – two on each side and one at the end. From the mound there are good views of Silbury Hill and the inaccessible East Kennet Long Barrow (said to be the longest, but 'only' reported to be 99m on Pastscape).

Jo Crane/Geoff Taylor

REMEMBERING THE ROMANS I

This was stimulated by a recent article in the *Association of Roman Archaeology News* 41 about a Roman epitaph found in Dorchester. A dozen years ago I wrote a dissertation for my archaeology degree on ages on Roman epitaphs from Cisalpine Gaul. That was followed by further analysis with a friend for Northern Peninsular Italy (“NPI”), and then she and I extracted ages from all the epitaphs from Rome itself with a view to writing a few papers. However, both our lives changed and we only managed to complete one paper. I doubt that the graphs and maths will be all that interesting, though some of the findings should be of interest, especially what actual epitaphs tell of the lives of named people so long ago.

So this is the first of a series of fairly short occasional articles, but first a bit of background. All of the epitaph information comes from the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (“CIL”), which was intended to gather together all the Roman inscriptions ever known from around the Empire. It was started in the mid-19th century and written in Latin – obviously right for the inscriptions but it does make reading descriptions difficult with my schoolboy Latin. The epitaphs generally follow a fairly formulaic approach and are a bit easier to understand, especially if you’re mainly interested in the ages shown.

The corpus continues to be updated, with new inscriptions published in an academic journal and supplements appearing from time to time. There are currently 17 printed volumes with over 180,000 inscriptions, as well as 13 supplementary volumes; one source suggests 300,000 inscriptions in total. A set of printed volumes is very expensive, so that many universities have a microfiche copy. Often, like Southampton, that’s just of the original volumes from the late 19th century. Working microfiches readers are becoming hard to find, and CIL are now slowly digitising the corpus. Our data extraction was all from microfiche, but I then found someone who had done a similar extraction for NPI and included all the updates. A bit of maths showed that her data and mine gave almost identical results, so that was alright.

Cisalpine Gaul was the 4 Roman regions (*regiones*) either side of the River Po, which they called Aemilia (*regio* VIII), Liguria (IX), Venetia (X) and Transpadana (XI). Some of these names, though not the boundaries, survive in modern Italy – Emilia Romagna, Liguria and Veneto. Whilst we would consider this a part of Italy rather than Gaul, the Roman didn’t until quite late. Its name derives from the large numbers of ‘Celtic’ people who settled there in the 6th- 4th centuries BC; inscriptions in the *Veneti* text persist until the 1st century BC. Cisalpine Gaul wasn’t a Roman province till c.89 BC or part of Italy until 42 BC. The large military presence maintained at Aquileia, almost at the eastern border of Venetia, until at least AD 168, was partly related to concerns about security in this area.



I’ve defined Northern Peninsular Italy as the remaining 4 Roman regions north of Rome, i.e. *regiones* IV-VII. Perhaps the Romans’ concerns over security had some basis, as the people in Cisalpine Gaul certainly showed differences from those in NPI. I would imagine that the larger area in the north was more hospitable than that to the south, which is much more hilly, and had a rather larger population; it certainly does now. The epigraphic habit there was possibly similar – 11,850 inscriptions in Cisalpine Gaul vs. 10,250 in NPI. What we might call the ‘epitaphic habit’ was, though, much lower, with 5,231 epitaphs in NPI (i.e. 51% of the total) against 2,394 (just 20%) in Cisalpine Gaul.

At the risk of going on too long I’ll finish this introduction with two initial conclusions from the research:

- Roman mortality was much higher than our own, unsurprisingly, with an average life expectancy of around 25 years at birth, less for females due to issues around childbirth and a bit more for males. For births today it’s 87.8 for males and 90.4 for females (Office for National Statistics Dec. 2019).
- Roman epitaphs are useless to determine mortality, since they don’t represent the whole population and are inaccurate. Most Romans probably didn’t know how old they were, and often exaggerated. The Dorchester epitaph will appear at some stage.

Geoff Taylor



Cranborne Chase
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Cranborne Chase
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
welcomes you to our **Open Day** anytime between
11am - 7pm on Wednesday 22 January

Please pop in for a cup to tea to see our new base,
meet the team and celebrate our designation as an
International Dark Sky Reserve

RSVP BY 14 JANUARY 2020: info@cranbornechase.org.uk | 01725 517417
Cranborne Chase AONB, Rushmore Farm, Tinkley Bottom, Tollard Royal, Wiltshire SP5 5QA



How to find us: Cranborne Chase AONB, Rushmore Farm, Tinkley Bottom, Tollard Royal, Wiltshire SP5 5QA. The entrance to the drive up to Rushmore Farm is on the B3081. From Sixpenny Handley the drive will be on your right. If you're coming from Tollard Royal it will be on your left. Call 01725 517417 if you have trouble finding us.
Do not follow the Sat Nav if it tries to take you through the pillars into Rushmore Park!

Sixpenny Handley



Sorry—No dogs on site
Free parking
01725 517618

Ancient Technology Centre

Introduction to Foraging

18th April 2020

13th June 2020

5th September 2020

Join us for a beginners guide to wild food foraging and cook some of the food you gather in our magnificent Earthhouse!

The course includes:-

- The law regarding foraging
- Identifying local plants and practical uses
- The medicinal and historical use of the food
- Sustainability and Folklore

10am-2pm ATC, Damerham Road, Cranborne, Dorset BH21 5RP

Book your place via Event Brite

Course:- £30 per person

Gift Vouchers available

www.ancienttechnologycentre.com

atc@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk



Blandford Museum Presents



**An illustrated talk on reconstructing the world of our fossil ancestors by
Anthropologist Professor Peter Andrews
with Illustrator Flick Baker**

Professor Andrews was formerly Head of Human Evolution at The Natural History Museum and holds Emeritus appointments at the NHM, at UC London and Bournemouth University. Flick Baker often created imaginary worlds for clients as a muralist; as an illustrator, she now reconstructs prehistoric and historical scenarios. Her paintings of fossil apes will be on display at Blandford Town Museum for the month of February.

Admission £5 Museum members £4

Friday, February 7th at 7pm in Blandford Parish Rooms

EDAS PROGRAMME

Unless otherwise stated, all lectures are from 7:30 – 9:30 pm at St Catherine's Church Hall, Lewens Lane, Wimborne, BH21 1LE. <http://www.dorset-archaeology.org.uk/programme.html>

2020			
Wed 8th January	Lecture	Monique Goodliffe	The Aristocrat and the Ironmaster (Dowlais and Wimborne)
Wed 12th February	Lecture	Josh Pollard University of Southampton	Settlement and monumentality in the Avebury landscape AT BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY
Wed 11th March	Lecture	AGM and members' talk	The Druce Neolithic Site – Lilian Ladle and Andrew Morgan
Wed 1st April	Lecture	Francis Taylor CBA Wessex	Discovering the Maya (esp. Tikal & Copan sites) NOT SECOND WEDNESDAY CHANGE FROM PRINTED PROGRAMME
Wed 13th May	Lecture	Tim Darvill Bournemouth University	Sticks and Stones and Broken Bones

DISTRICT DIARY

The diary of what I hope are interesting events in the area depends partly on information received from the organisations concerned, some of which organise events at fairly short notice.

Your information is also welcome – do let me know of any events.

PLEASE CHECK RELEVANT WEBSITES/CONTACTS FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION BEFORE VISITING.

2020			
Tues 7th January	'A Cup of Tea' – How tea led to the rise & fall of Empires, fair trade and food safety laws	BNSS	Lecture by Gordon Le Pard, maritime archaeologist
Wed 15th January	Purbeck's Early Archaeologists	Wareham Society	Lecture by Bryan Popple
Thu 16th January	Aerial Photography & Archaeology	Blandford Group	Lecture by Claire Pinder, Dorset Council Archaeologist
Sat 25th January	General Knowledge Quiz and fish supper (can bring a bottle) MC: Julian Richards	Blandford Group	7pm at Parish Rooms, £8 (pay on night) MUST BOOK with Sally Woodlock 01258 452831 or sally@blandfordu3a.plus.com
Wed 5th February	Living with Monuments - around Avebury, c.4,000–1,500BC	AVAS	Lecture by Prof. Josh Pollard, University of Southampton
Fri 7th February	Forests, Fruit & Fossils – illustrated reconstructions of the world of our fossil ancestors	Blandford Museum	Prof. Peter Andrews and Flick Baker Blandford Parish Rooms, 7pm – see poster above
Sat 15th February	Inflatable Museum at Blandford Forum	County Museum	Dorset County Museum on tour – see p.11 October Newsletter
Wed 19th February	Chedworth Roman Villa – what's new?	Wareham Society	Lecture by Nancy Grace, National Trust archaeologist

Thu 20th February	Portable Antiquities Scheme & the Treasure Act	Blandford Group	Lecture by Ciorstaidh Hayward Trevarthen, PAS Finds Officer, Dorset
Sat 29th February	Inflatable Museum at Lytchett Matravers	County Museum	Dorset County Museum on tour – see p.11 October Newsletter
Wed 4th March	The earliest farming villages in the Middle East	AVAS	Lecture by Sarah Elliott, Bournemouth University
Sat 14th March	Insights into the way of life of our ancestors: geochemical analysis of archaeological materials in the field	BNSS	Dr. Sarah Elliott, Bournemouth University
Wed 18th March	Golbekli Tepe - a Prehistoric Ceremonial Site in Turkey	Wareham Society	Lecture by Tim Darvill, Bournemouth University
Thu 19th March	Local archaeology or travels of Edrys; tbc	Blandford Group	AGM & Lecture by Edrys Luprian
Sat 21st March	Inflatable Museum at Corfe Castle	County Museum	Dorset County Museum on tour – see p.11 October Newsletter
Sat 21st March	Bronze Age CSI: A very cold case from Knowlton	BNSS	Gabrielle Delbarre, Bournemouth University
Wed 1st April	Tba	AVAS	Lecture
Wed 15th April	Life, death and feasting – 6000 years of occupation at Worth Matravers	Wareham Society	Lecture by Lilian Ladle
Thu 16th April	Finding Nero (and other Emperors)	Blandford Group	Lecture by Miles Russell, Bournemouth University
Wed 20th May	Music in Every Home – the disc vs. the cylinder	Wareham Society	Lecture by Gordon Bartlet, specialist in restoring mechanical musical instruments IN WAREHAM MASONIC HALL
Thu 21st May	Pre-Colombian Peru	Blandford Group	Lecture by Tim Brown
Wed 17th June	Portland – Isle of Fascination	Wareham Society	Lecture by Stuart Morris, local historian and author

Archaeology Societies

- **Avon Valley Archaeological Society:** <http://www.avas.org.uk/>
Meetings at Ann Rose Hall, Greyfriars Community Centre, Christchurch Road, Ringwood BH24 1DW, 7:30pm 1st Wednesday of month except June, July & August. Visitors £3.50; membership £10 pa.
- **Blandford Museum Archaeology Group:** <http://blandfordtownmuseum.org.uk/arcaeology.html>
Meetings at Blandford Museum, Bere's Yard, Market Place, Blandford Forum, DT11 7HQ, normally 7:30pm 3rd Thursday of each month (although the Museum is being refurbished from November 2019 – please check for alternative meeting location). Visitors £4; membership £10 pa.
- **Bournemouth Natural Sciences Society:** <http://bnss.org.uk>
Events at 39 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BN1 3NS; lectures Tuesday 7:30pm/Saturday 2:30pm.
- **The Christchurch Antiquarians:** <https://christchurchantiquarians.wordpress.com/>
No lecture programme but involved in practical archaeology projects. Membership £10 pa.
- **Dorset Natural History & Archaeology Society:** <http://www.dorsetcountymuseum.org/events>
Events at various locations in Dorchester, usually ticketed
- **Wareham and District Archaeology & Local History Society:** The website is no longer updated; for information contact Karen Brown at karen.brown68@btinternet.com
Meetings at the Town Hall, Wareham (corner of North Street & East Street), normally 7:30pm 3rd Wednesday of each month except July & August. Visitors welcome for £3; membership £10 pa.

Bournemouth Natural Science Society 2020 Lecture Programme

(Tuesdays @ 7:30, Saturdays @ 2:30)

JANUARY		
Tuesday 7 th	'A Cup of Tea' – How tea led to the rise & fall of Empires, fair trade and food safety laws	Gordon Le Pard
Saturday 11 th	Formation of Stars and Planetary Systems	Dr. Claire Davies
Tuesday 14 th	Dorset Birding, Past and Present	Nick Hull
Saturday 18 th	Polar Science and Greenland Ice-Field Research	Robert Law
Tuesday 21 st	The story of Gideon Mantel 1790-1852, paleontologist	Ray Chapman
Saturday 25 th	How Bournemouth Grew 1880-1930	John Soane
Tuesday 28 th	Fungi are more than soup	Stuart Skeates
FEBRUARY		
Saturday 1 st	The Art and Skills of Digital Wildlife Photography	Mike Read
Tuesday 4 th	The Arts & Crafts Movement Locally	Gordon Le Pard
Saturday 8 th	Centenary Celebration Open Day 2-4pm	
Tuesday 11 th	William Herschel and the Rings of Uranus (8pm)	Dr. Stuart Eves
Saturday 15 th	Tectonic Drift and the Rise of Madagascar	Ashley Leftwich
Tuesday 18 th	The growing and cultivation of Tropical Orchids in the UK	Ken Griffiths
Saturday 22 nd	Big Cat update	Jonathan McGowan
Tuesday 25 th	John Cresswell: Archetypal Researcher and Historian	Steve Limburn
Saturday 29 th	Calendars: Cultures and Clocks	James Fradgley
MARCH		
Tuesday 3 rd	Written in Stone: a social, sentimental & architectural history	John Hubbard
Saturday 7 th	Science Lecture - tba	tbd
Tuesday 10 th	How well can you hang a picture frame?	Sharon Docherty
Saturday 14 th	Insights into the way of life of our ancestors: geochemical analysis of archaeological materials in the field	Dr. Sarah Elliott
Tuesday 17 th	100 Years of Bournemouth News 1920-2020	Hattie Miles
Saturday 21 st	Bronze Age CSI: A very cold case from Knowlton	Gabrielle Delbarre
Tuesday 24 th	Dorset after Dinosaurs	Mike Earle
Saturday 28 th	Cassini at Saturn	Prof. Carl Murray