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NEWSLETTER – June 2020

Editor's Notes

I'm really pleased to be able to include the first of a series of articles from Neil Meldrum, looking at human cultural evolution starting from *Australopithecus*, about 6 million years ago. This first article, **In the Beginning**, takes us up to about a million years ago, when our ancestors were probably starting to develop self-awareness.

I'm grateful that Alan continues to provide a list of **Weblinks** to interesting items that he's found on the internet, as well as providing a **Highlight** covering things that particularly struck him. This month he's also written a short piece on **Online Resources**, summarising how he keeps managing to find so much to share with you. He would really like some responses (and so would I).

I did get just one response on Alan's question about the rather straight-laced NT response to the facemask added to the Cerne Abbas Giant, but from my friend Colin at the ATC rather than a member: "Some people get rather petty about things like the Giant's mask & forget that he gets crawled over by the people who renovate him regularly. Any chance of damage is minuscule compared to some of the things the National Trust do." Does anyone want to reply?

PLEASE SEND RESPONSES & CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EDITOR ON THE ADDRESS ABOVE, **NOT** TO THE EDAS EMAIL ADDRESS AS THAT JUST MEANS THAT PETER HAS TO PASS THEM ON.

View from Above returns after missing a month because I included too many other things. This is its 28th outing, so Jo Crane & Sue Newman deserve our thanks for the fascinating aerial photographs.

Remembering the Romans also returns with the 4th article in the series. Since the last article was some time ago, there's a longer introduction to remind you of the earlier articles.

We hope that the **EDAS Programme** can go ahead, with some great speakers and subjects in the list. Of course, we don't know what the rules will be, what St. Catherine's hall will allow and how people, including our speakers, will feel about being in a group. We're looking at alternatives, basically built around filming lectures. There will be more news as soon as we can.

Not surprisingly, the **District Diary** is still (almost) empty, so let me know if you hear of anything. We do have the **CBA's Festival of Archaeology**, now partly digital.

It is, though, pleasing to report that work on the Priest's House Museum's major refurbishment re-started on 11th May, adapted for social distancing of course. Their two First World War dramas are now available on YouTube:

- Tommy's Sisters: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-AVejnIzKI&feature=youtu.be>
- Aftermath: <https://youtu.be/-zgHp-FjEkw>

Geoff Taylor

In the Beginning

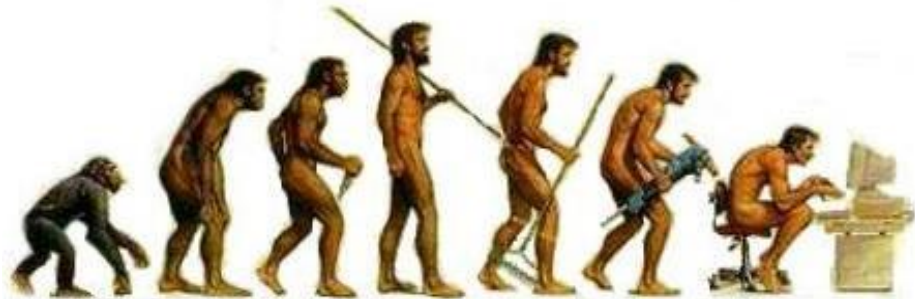
To do a series of articles about cultural evolution and the development of religious belief is quite a daunting prospect. It's a massive subject, open to all kinds of different interpretations depending on where one is coming from and one's own beliefs or, indeed, non-beliefs. There are so many different perceptions, stories, experiences, thought processes and cultures, that it is impossible to know or recount the whole story, or even to know where to start the story. So, I start with an apology – I can only present a brief overview from a personal perspective, but I will take the bull by the horns and begin when *Australopithecus* (southern ape) first appeared in East Africa. That was 6 million years ago, give or take a few hundred thousand years (although this dating is fairly secure, dating can be controversial and is often subject to change with new discoveries).



But before I do that, I just want to comment briefly on the difference between biological, or Darwinian, evolution on the one hand and cultural evolution on the other. These articles are principally about the cultural evolution of mankind, that is to say the story of the development of human culture from the time that we became modern humans (*Homo Sapiens*), about 100,000 or so years ago, and I am going to stop at about 1000 AD (later history is not my strongpoint). Biological evolution is the story of the development of life on Earth, from one-celled bacteria billions of years ago to the many millions of different life forms, including ourselves, that exist today.

So let's start at the point in biological evolution when a species evolved from chimpanzees and eventually became ourselves, i.e. *Australopithecus*. This species evolved in Africa from around 6 million to 3 million years ago.

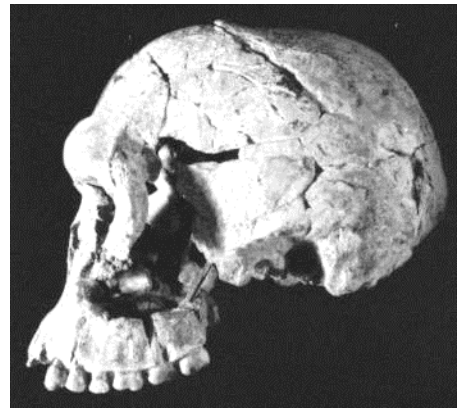
They were probably only slightly larger than a modern chimpanzee, and would have spent their days foraging around on the ground but, over this lengthy period, developed an increasing ability to walk upright. Night-



time, however, would probably find them in the trees with their chimpanzee cousins. Cranial capacity was around 350 cc, going up to 500 cc towards the end of the era; modern human cranial capacity averages 1350-1450 cc. Present day chimpanzees have a cranial capacity of 300-400 cc, so our *Australopithecus* forebears would only have been a modicum brighter than modern chimps.

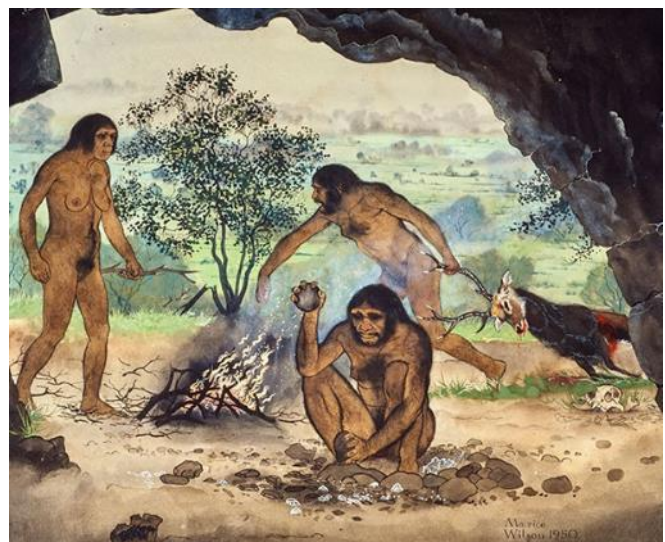
'Hominid' is the generic term for all the various species, including *Australopithecus*, leading up to and including ourselves, *Homo Sapiens*. *Australopithecus* was followed by the next significant hominid species to evolve, *Homo Habilis*, c.3 – 1.7 million years ago. Their cranial capacity was in the region of 500-650 cc, so getting brighter. *Habilis* walked on two legs, although probably was still more apelike than human, but with a more robust digestive system than the *Australopithecus* predecessors. This meant less time and energy expended on chewing and digestion, thus presenting a greater opportunity for socialising. Modern chimpanzees, and probably most of the *Australopithecines*, have to take up to 8 hours a day chewing and digesting; a dreadful waste of time!

The Upper Palaeolithic Period started about 2.5 million years ago and went on to 40,000 or so years ago (it varies depending on which authority one goes to). At the start of this period, for the first time, there is evidence of hominid tool use by our *Homo Habilis* forebears. Like their *Australopithecus* predecessors, *Habilis* originated in East Africa, but were clearly rather smarter. In all probability they would have been responsible for the demise of *Australopithecus*, by actually killing them, outsmarting them or both. From about 2 million years ago, we see the first evidence of the use of crude stone tools by *Homo Habilis*. These were probably used for cutting up dead animals; it is unlikely that *Habilis* would have done much hunting for another few hundred thousand years as, in all probability, they would not yet have developed the cognitive capability to move from a gathering life style to hunting. But it does seem that, in scavenging, *Habilis* developed a particular taste for bone marrow, extracted from the bones of dead animals. This is an exceptionally rich source of protein and was surely integral to the continued development of the hominid brain.



The next stage in the story of hominid evolution is represented by *Homo Ergaster*, around 1.8 million to 600,000 years ago (cranial capacity 600-900 cc). *Ergaster* developed the more sophisticated Acheulean stone tool culture, evidenced by larger more defined and sharper stone hand axes. This was the first hominid to start living in larger groups. Although initially still predominantly a scavenger, there is clear evidence that of the beginnings of a career of hunting. With increasing proficiency, the carcass was no longer consumed immediately at the site of the kill but was brought back to camp to share with others. This represents a very crucial stage in hominid evolution, the sharing of food with individuals who do not participate in the hunt. It is coupled with the other major innovation which possibly originated with *Ergaster*, fire.

Fire was revolutionary, but it is probable that, although *Ergaster* may have been bright enough to utilize and preserve natural fire, it is thought that the creation of fire might have been beyond them and would have been the preserve of the successor species, *Homo Erectus*. Fire would certainly have made bringing back the kill from the hunt worthwhile. For the first time hominids could warm themselves and see what they were doing at night. Fire would have provided protection against wild animals, which would have gone a long way to alleviating fear in our remote ancestors. These factors would have had an enormous impact on social gathering, but perhaps the greatest impact of fire was on the preparation of food.



We are now coming to a hominid more like ourselves, *Homo Erectus*, 1.5million to 500,000 years ago with cranial capacity 800-1200 cc. Again, these evolved in East Africa, and probably lived side by side with *Homo Habilis*. Again, *Erectus* may have killed off the earlier species or, simply, *Habilis* couldn't compete and disappeared, but not before there was some element of interbreeding. It is becoming

increasingly evident that *Erectus* and *Ergaster*, and possibly *Ergaster* and *Habilis*, may actually have had meaningful and fruitful relationships between individuals – a similar story to the later one between *Homo Sapiens* and Neanderthals and with other Archaic Humans.

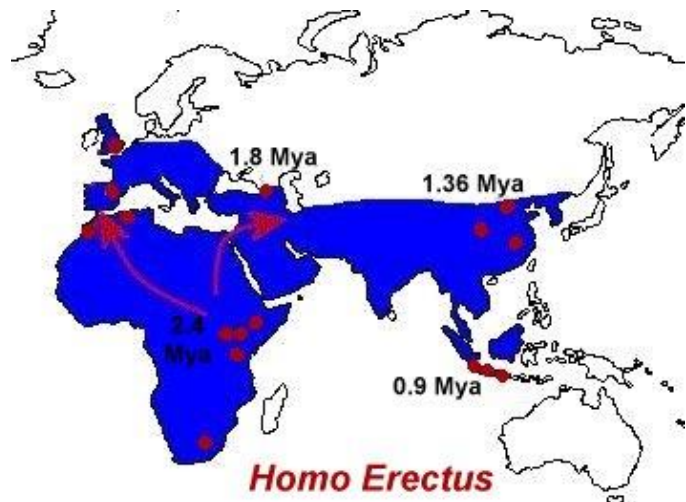
At some stage, probably around 7-800,000 years ago, our *Homo Erectus* ancestors mastered the making



of fire and acquired a taste for cooked meat. Nobody is quite sure why or how this came about, but the outcome was life changing and in all probability was the major factor in the comparatively rapid increase in brain size of *Erectus*. Early hominids, like their chimpanzee cousins, would have spent most of their waking hours gathering vegetation, masticating and digesting. Cooked food changed all this: cooked meat is easier to chew and digest, not to mention that it tastes a lot better, whilst the cooking process kills bacteria and parasites. Time previously spent in mastication and digestion was now freed up for following other pursuits. Our ancestors became bigger, healthier and stronger. With fire came greater social integration, more

communal hunting and feasting, encouraging greater communication between individuals. Perhaps we see here the start of simple language.

Erectus's tooling was more sophisticated as were their hunting techniques, e.g. they may even have manufactured wooden spears up to six feet in length, sharpened for hunting. With their larger brains, and increased strength and resilience, *Erectus* migrated halfway around the world. This coincided with a time of considerable Earth cooling, so that the use of fire and clothing would have become an absolute necessity in the colder northern climates. But the big biological evolutionary step as far as *Homo Erectus* was concerned may well have been the evolution in the brain of a form of self-awareness, a crucial stage in hominid development.



It is thought that, from around a million or so years ago, *Homo Erectus* might have started to become aware of himself and of his own existence. It is unlikely that they would have been able to express this awareness to others in cogent terms but they may well have been able to make others aware of their own awareness! This was a crucial step in human evolution, because being self-aware must be a prerequisite for any higher thought processes. One could equate this to child development; very young children are normally not able to recognise themselves in the mirror, but then start to show signs of self-recognition. Of course, as we all know, some of the child's first words are often 'me' and 'mine', a clear sign of when children are well aware of themselves.

Evolution from *Homo Erectus* is where we start to tell the story of what we might unscientifically call 'proto-humans', the Archaic Human species that led to *Homo Sapiens* a few hundred thousand years down the line. But that must wait for the next article in the series.

Neil Meldrum

Someone told me they'd been paying their cleaner during lockdown as she's working from home. They have Zoom calls and the cleaner tells her what to do.

Follow-ons to the items about the myth that 5G masts cause or exacerbate COVID-19:

Apparently “5G causes headaches, mainly for gullible celebrities”, i.e. the ones who have to say their comments linking 5G to the virus were “accidental”, “taken out of context”, “misinterpreted”, etc. I’ve not seen one actually say “I was wrong” or “stupid”. Gwyneth Paltrow’s Goop wellness site has quietly stopped promoting ‘5G protection’ products, including a £64 wrap for pregnant women (no doubt a piece of cloth you could buy for next to nothing elsewhere).

A mobile network engineer in France, a decade or so ago, told the story that the mayor of each village he went to install a mast said to put it on the water tower. After he did, people would complain of having headaches, so the mayor would call a village meeting where the engineer told them the mast wasn’t switched on yet. Headaches miraculously stopped, mast switched on, and on to the next village. The same people got headaches when the next generation of masts were put up.

Don’t mess with kids

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales.

The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because, even though it was a very large mammal, its throat was very small.

The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale.

Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible.

The little girl said, 'When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah'.

The teacher asked, 'What if Jonah went to hell?'

The little girl replied, 'Then you ask him'.

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Catholic elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The nun made a note, and posted it on the apple tray:

'Take only ONE. God is watching.'

Moving along the lunch line, at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies.

A child had written a note: 'Take all you want. God is watching the apples.'

Online Resources

When talking to people about the weblinks, they have often queried how I’ve found so many items each month and commented that it must take a lot of time looking for them. In fact, it does not take much time as I simply pick up on the items I see in the websites I mainly use – BBC, The Guardian and the MSN homepage. The BBC and Guardian are easy on the eye as they are not covered in adverts and are not behind a pay wall (the reason you do not see Telegraph items in the list). MSN is not quite so good, but then I either go back to the original outlet, or Google the subject to find a suitable source. Lack of annoying and irrelevant adverts being one criterion, but I also look for a good write-up and illustrations.

The May weblinks includes, by chance, four items from 'Live Science'. This is an outlet I do not think I have come across before, but when I looked I noticed it has a 'History' tab and under this heading there is a plethora of items on a wide variety of subjects. It is a resource I shall return to in future, but it also got me thinking – are there similar outlets that **you** use to keep tabs on history and/or archaeology subjects? If so it would be good to share them, and I would be happy to compile a list for inclusion in a future newsletter. **Drop me an email at alan.dedden@gmail.com.**

Alan Dedden

[I just followed up on an item from the recently circulated CBA Wessex June Newsletter about one of the *Antiques Roadshow* presenters finding Roman artefacts in his Chippenham garden. Apparently that was the result of “exacerbating” the garden; well, I guess it would be. That was on the Express website – lots of adverts and very poorly written – ed.]

Web Link Highlight April 2020

This month it is difficult, for me at least, to look beyond the National Geographic article on the Black Death. Quite apart from the links to the current crisis generally, the Black Death has local resonance. It entered our country when a ship docked at Melcombe in 1348 and then, through the deaths it was responsible for, caused many villages in Dorset to either shrink dramatically, or disappear altogether (Richard Good's *Lost Villages of Dorset* and Maurice Beresford's *Lost Villages of England* are good sources for further reading). I also have two personal reasons for looking closer at this article than some others. On a visit to All Saints Church at West Parley a few years ago, during a walk with East Dorset Heritage Trust, our attention was drawn to the list of rectors, and in particular to the year 1342 during which there were a number of rectors (I forget how many). This, we were told, was because of the black death. It was only later that I realised that this could not be as it had not entered the country at that point. Of course, it is possible that this was an earlier occurrence of a similar disease, but I have not noticed similar events in other churches visited on other walks. Is there an EDAS member who knows more about these unexplained happenings in 1342?

The other reason takes me back to living in Seattle from September 1977 to December 1979. For our holiday in 1978 we decided to camp along the Oregon coast. It has some spectacular scenery, in places reminiscent of the Cornish coast, and very few towns. The trip was planned to drive from Seattle down to the Oregon border with California and then camp along the coast in stages on the way back north. But on the way south we wanted to divert to a well know beauty spot called Crater Lake. This is the lake filled caldera of an extinct volcano in the Cascade mountain range, and is the focal point of Crater Lake National Park. It is at an elevation of about 6000ft. We were holidaying in the last week of August and when we left the main north-south highway it was a beautiful day with a clear blue sky. By the time we had driven up the mountain and got to the entrance of the National Park, we were in a blizzard and could not see more than a few yards in any direction.



After spending a freezing night camping at 4000ft, we headed to the coast and the first campsite just inside Oregon. It was laid out with garden pitches, each with a table, a barbeque and electric hook-up. There was also a cute local resident - either a squirrel or chipmunk - who was especially friendly while we were eating. Then we mentioned this to one of the site rangers and she said "yes, they are cute, but a bit of a nuisance because they carry bubonic plague". As you might imagine, this put us off a bit, but we also thought this might be intended to stop us feeding them. Then, reading the National Geographic article, it says that it is spreading amongst the mountain lions in Yellowstone, so maybe it was true.

However, there is one item in the weblinks list that I cannot ignore - who did not think of Terry Pratchett's Discworld stories when they saw the item about the carved stone turtle? I am now waiting for the announcement that they have found carved stone elephants!

Alan Dedden

[This reminded me of our visit to Crater Lake, just a couple of years before Alan. The photograph of me was taken late June (we were heading to friends near Los Angeles for the Bicentennial). I thought the resident was a ground squirrel like one we saw at Crater Lake... but then Alan came back and told me it was a chickaree, as pictured ... not 'my little chickadee' as that's a bird - ed.].



May Weblinks

"Crazy Beast" Fossil Rewrites The Rules

<https://www.livescience.com/ancient-bizarre-mammal-madagascar.html>

Wrecks Of D-Day Rehearsal Landing Craft Given Scheduled Status

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/01/wrecks-of-us-vessels-from-d-day-rehearsal-given-protected-status>

Philanthropy In Medieval Cambridge

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/may/02/how-compassionate-capitalism-flourished-in-medieval-cambridge>

Egyptian Teenager Mummy With Jewellery Found In Luxor

<https://www.livescience.com/ancient-egyptian-teenage-mummy.html>

Bronze Age Burial Found During Skate Park Construction

<https://www.livescience.com/bronze-age-chieftain-burial.html>

Exposing A Myth - VCs Not Made From Captured Russian Guns

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/may/03/show-your-mettle-victoria-cross-not-made-of-captured-russian-guns-after-all>

Ancient Egyptian 'Funeral Home' Was One Stop Shop To Afterlife

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/05/ancient-egyptian-funeral-home-one-stop-shop-afterlife/>

The Hittites Fast War Chariots Threatened Mighty Egypt

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/magazine/2020/03-04/hittite-fast-war-chariots-threatened-egypt/>

A Story Of Our Times - How The Black Death Started And Spread So Rapidly

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/magazine/2015/10-11/fast-lethal-black-death-spread-mile-per-day/>

Drone Survey Finds William Wallace's 'Hidden Fort'

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-south-scotland-52536578>

50,000 Year Old String Found At Neanderthal Site In France

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-52267383>

Carved Stone Turtle Found In Angkor

<https://www.archaeology.org/news/8681-200508-angkor-turtle-statue>

DNA Discovery Aligns With Canadian First Nation Oral History

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/10/dna-canada-first-nations-ancestral-story>

Mud Dock Where HMS Beagle Spent Final Days Given Protected Status

<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/rare-19th-century-ship-dock-protected/>

New Evidence Of Longer Overlap Of Modern Humans And Neanderthals Than Previously Thought

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-52614870>

Archaeology In The Lockdown - Amateurs Find Hundreds Of New Sites

<https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-lockdown-boost-for-archaeology-as-amateurs-uncover-roman-remains-11987364>

Evidence Found Of 1000 Year Old Tsunami In East Africa

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/05/1000-year-old-bones-oldest-known-east-africa-tsunami-victims/>

Viking Ship Excavated To Save It From Fungus

<https://www.livescience.com/viking-ship-fungus-excavation.html>

Leather Mouse Found In Vindolanda Finds Archive

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/may/16/practical-joke-or-toy-leather-mouse-shows-romans-playful-side>

Last Resting Place Of The Limehouse Samurai Found

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8328837/Last-resting-place-Limehouse-samurai-400-years-later.html>

Rare Toothless Dinosaur Found In Australia

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-52712005>

3,800 Year Old Mural Found Inside Ceremonial Building In Peru

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-49407795>

3 Year Old Finds Ancient Skull

<https://westbridgfordwire.com/three-year-old-boy-finds-ancient-remains-of-a-human-skull-in-southwell/>

Bones Of 'Too Many' Mammoths Found In Mexico

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/22/mexico-city-mammoth-bones-found>

200 Year Old Shipwreck Found In Gulf Of Mexico

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-52817822?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world&link_location=live-reporting-story

Burial Of Irish Rebel Lord Found In Spain

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-spain-archaeology/spanish-dig-unearths-human-remains-in-hunt-for-irish-rebel-lord-idUKKBN2352K3>

Please send your weblinks to Alan Dedden at alan.dedden@gmail.com

'The Hulk' - one of Bryan Popple's drawings, included simply because I liked it.



If you receive an email with the subject "Ding Dong", don't open it. It's Jehovah's Witnesses working from home.

View from Above No 28: Knowlton Church & Neolithic Henge

*Photo by
Sue Newman
and Jo Crane*



This is a photograph which was shown by Martin Green in his February 2018 presentation to EDAS and in the write-up in the following newsletter, although rather smaller than here. I thought it was well worth repeating, but have tried to provide mostly new information from that in the newsletter (which is online on our website, or email me for a copy if you wish).

This famous site marries a ruined 12th century church with a Neolithic henge monument dating from around 4,000 years earlier. The henge, and indeed the church, are rare upstanding survivors of the extensive ancient monuments within the local landscape – one of the greatest Bronze Age and Neolithic ceremonial complexes in Southern England. Martin Green told us that, within one square kilometre of Knowlton, 9 henges and over 120 ring ditches (mostly ploughed out burial mounds) have been found to date. Many of these sites have been identified fairly recently, with aerial photography playing a large part.

Of course, without modern technology most of these sites wouldn't be known. For example, Heywood Sumner's 1913 *Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase*, whilst providing an excellent plan of the immediate area around Knowlton Church, could only give a very limited appreciation of the wider area. By 1939, and the plan below, aerial photographs had started to reveal the full extent of the complex. It seems certain, though, that much remains to be discovered in the wider area around Knowlton.

Church Henge shown in the photograph, also known as Central Circle, is the middle of three henges, both geographically and in size, but by far the best preserved – probably as a result of protection from having the church built in the centre. It is 106x94m at its maximum, with a ditch 10m wide and now up to 1m deep, and a 10m wide outer bank still standing to almost 2m high. There are now entrances to the southwest, east and northeast, with no real certainty as to which might be original. The date of the ploughed-out rounded square 'Old Churchyard' enclosure is equally uncertain.

The South Circle is, of course, the largest henge in the 3 'Knowlton Circles' at around 250m diameter. Although crossed by the road and mostly ploughed out, the bank and parts of the ditch survived to be scheduled behind Knowlton Farm, as shown on the plan. That is, they did until the owner started to develop the site and, despite the scheduling, take the bank down two or three years ago. It took officialdom some time to act to stop this and 'have it put back', and the owner wasn't even prosecuted!

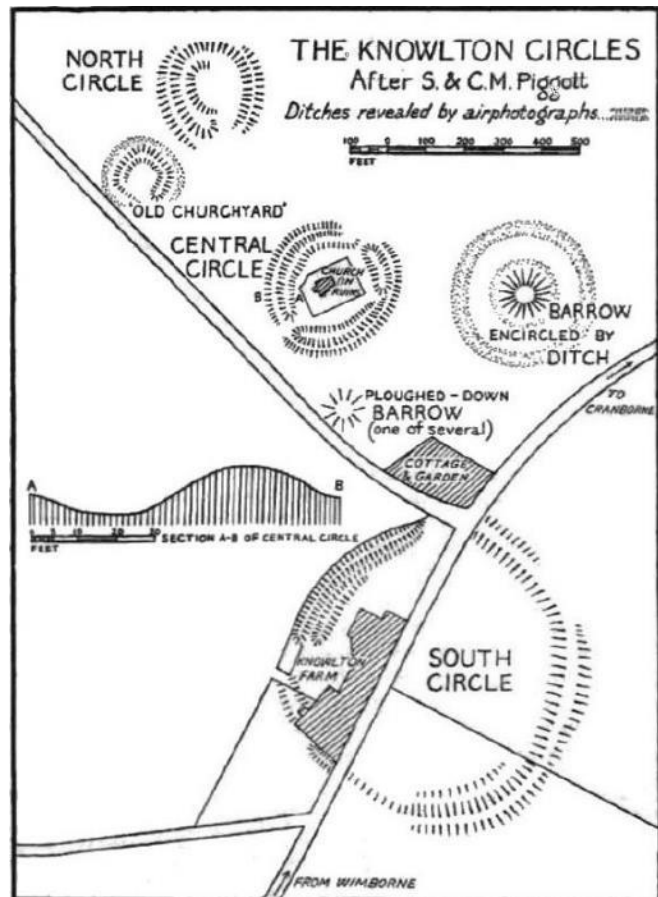
Hidden by trees and bushes, the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age 'Great Barrow' is the largest in Dorset, 40m in diameter, 6m high and with its outer ditch of 120m showing only as a crop mark (There is another Dorset 'Great Barrow' on Ferndown Common, north of Ringwood Road not far from the Angel Inn although, it seems, erroneously labelled by the Ordnance Survey to the northeast of its true position.).

The flint-rendered church was built in the 12th century to serve Knowlton village several hundred metres to the northwest by the River Allen, now surviving as earthworks covering 4ha. That it was located at such a distance from the settlement strongly suggests the appropriation of older, pagan sites for the 'new' religion. That appropriation may well have started much earlier, though the only specific evidence I found was the mid-to-late Anglo-Saxon cemetery to the east of the church. Sixteen burials were excavated there in the late 1950s, some oriented east-west.

The sub-rectangular churchyard within the henge, visible in the photograph, apparently contains "hundreds of medieval graves". Presumably they mostly came from Knowlton settlement, which was abandoned in the late 15th century, it is said as the result of the Black Death. However, the church retained sufficient congregation to continue in use, and there are 15th and 18th century additions and alterations. It was abandoned after the roof collapsed in the 18th century, and its Norman font is now in the church at nearby Woodlands.

The church has a reputation for being haunted, with one suggestion that the henge ditch is "inside the rampart ... to prevent the egress of the spirits confined within". A phantom horse and rider are said to gallop across the site in the dead of night, and then to pass straight through the church as though it wasn't there. Elsewhere, a ghostly face has been witnessed peering from the top window of the tower. Then there is the shade of a weeping woman, whom some accounts describe as a nun, that has apparently been seen kneeling outside the church. I can't say that I find the site has an unusual atmosphere, though my sister, visiting from Australia about 10 years ago and fascinated by all things ancient, said that she felt a bit cold there on a bright, sunny, summer's day.

Geoff Taylor



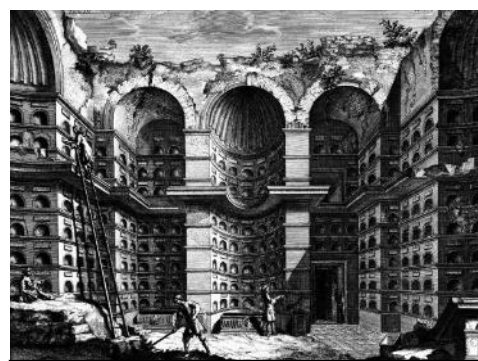
REMEMBERING THE ROMANS IV

Earlier in this series (January 2020 newsletter), I've looked at the source of the epitaphs we'd researched for Italy from Rome to the Alps – the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* ("CIL"). These epitaphs don't represent the whole population, so aren't useful in determining mortality. In fact most Romans probably didn't know their exact age, and they were prone to exaggeration. I've discussed a plausible basis for the very high Roman mortality, particularly amongst children, and some of the effects that caused, such as the need to have many children just to maintain the population

Most epitaphs have a considerable number of abbreviations, which can make them difficult to understand, and very few are dateable. The research was only on the pagan ones, mostly from about AD 50-250 after which, of course, Christian memorials became much more common. Looking at the biases in commemoration, we felt that the Romans were most concerned to record what we called 'social value', related to the perceived importance of the stage in life they reached. But what sort of people were memorialised, and how might their 'social value' be seen?

There is a common assumption, in much of the literature, that all those whose death left a mark in the written record were from the more privileged strata of society, though this has been increasingly challenged in recent years. It does, though, seem likely that the poorer members of society left no memorial, and there are literary descriptions of *puticuli*, pits where the very poorest were dumped. Those who could just afford some sort of funeral may well have buried the ashes in a simple pottery jar, probably marked with a painted wooden sign.

Perhaps the next level was the burial club, buying space for a cinerary urn in a collective chamber or *columbarium* (literally a dovecote). There were hundreds of these, some huge, but only about two dozen remain extant in Rome, mostly underground. These are neat, ordered spaces with rows of niches, rather than the rough and rambling catacombs with crude recesses hacked out of the tufa rock. Many of the epitaphs recorded from Rome, and probably elsewhere, came from markers for the niches in *columbaria*. In fact, some *columbaria* retain some of these to this day, with the wealthier ones carved on marble slabs.



A 1756 engraving of a columbarium in Rome, reserved for slaves and freedmen of Emperor Augustus and his wife, Livia.

A basic stone tombstone probably cost under 100 *sesterces* in the 1st century. In comparison, a soldier's monthly wage then was around 90 *sesterces*; a relatively high level of pay, although food, clothing and equipment was deducted from this. Studies have shown that epitaphs were not restricted to those of high status or wealth, though they mostly reflect what might be called 'the respectable classes' – people with, at least, a solid occupation or small business. Perhaps oddly, the highest classes seem to be almost absent, since they would have proclaimed their status on any epitaph.

Perhaps the most obvious reflection of 'social worth' shown by epitaphs is in terms of gender. About 61% of the epitaphs from Cisalpine Gaul are for males, with a similar percentage for those giving ages. Northern Peninsular Italy is much the same, but the 33,000 epitaphs we found from Rome are nearer two-thirds for men. Of course, women were second class citizens; well, not actually citizens at all. One analyst said that this bias in commemoration could "only be explained by the relatively low social estimation of females". Yet this brings a slight puzzle related to who was actually ensuring that an epitaph was provided.



A funerary relief of a husband and wife, clearly showing the man as much older.

Women tended to marry relatively young, in their later teens or early 20s, generally to men 5 or more years older. When they divorced, or one died, most re-married. This was strongly encouraged by Augustus' legislation, which expected women to be married during their child-bearing years. The tendency, then, was for women to be married to older, often much older, men. Someone did some clever maths to show that, despite the issues with childbirth, husbands generally died first. So, does more male epitaphs suggest that women commemorated their husbands more than men commemorated their wives?

In fact, there are more complications to cloud the issue. From the later Republic, marriage *sine manu* was by far the most common, in which the woman remained legally and financially in her father's power rather than her husband's. This was actually beneficial to the wife, in that she was likely to become independent when her father died, probably before her husband. She might, then, have been able to gather funds of her own. On the other hand, inheritance was usually to any children so, on the whole, divorced and widowed women actually needed to remarry.

I'll come to one answer in the next article.

Geoff Taylor



THE UK'S BIGGEST CELEBRATION OF ARCHAEOLOGY



CBA
FESTIVAL OF
ARCHAEOLOGY
2020

NEW DATES

11-19 JULY
DIGITAL EVENTS

24 OCTOBER-1 NOVEMBER
ON THE GROUND EVENTS



festival.archaeologyuk.org

   [@archaeologyuk](https://www.instagram.com/archaeologyuk)

We have decided to hold a week of digital activity to ensure everyone can still enjoy the festival in July, despite the current social distancing measures. The second week, in October, will provide the opportunity to participate in on the ground Festival events and activities around the UK. Attending events in your local area is a great way to support the local groups, charities, museums and heritage organisations that have been affected by coronavirus.

This year's Festival theme is Climate and Environment.

Digital events 11-19 July

The first part is designed to help people explore archaeology from home, including A Day in Archaeology and Ask an Archaeologist Day.

On the ground events 14 October – 1 November

The second part will be an opportunity to get out and discover some incredible archaeology, including talks, walks, hands on activities, skills training and family-friendly fun.

Keep in touch

We will be updating the [Festival website](http://festival.archaeologyuk.org) regularly with news and event details and we will also be launching the first of this year's Festival competitions in the coming weeks. To keep up to date with all the latest news you can sign up for our e-newsletter or get in touch with your questions by emailing us at festival@archaeologyuk.org.

Help support the Festival

We are grateful for all the support we have received over the years from our event organisers, funders, CBA members & the public to help the Festival become the biggest celebration of archaeology in the UK.

To make the Festival even better in the future we need your help. We would like to be able to deliver more events ourselves and provide more help and support to our event organisers so that an even bigger audience can enjoy and be inspired by archaeology. A donation of just £5 will make a difference and help ensure the Festival continues for years to come. To make your donation please follow [this link](#) or text DISCOVER to 70970 to donate £5 now.

EDAS 2020-2021 PROGRAMME

Subject to coronavirus restrictions, 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 9th September	Lecture	John Smith	The Battle of Britain Over Dorset, 1940
Wed 14th October	Lecture	Andrew Birley	Recent Excavations at Vindolanda and Revealing Magna Roman Fort AT BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY
Wed 11th November	Lecture	Wayne Bartlett	AD871 - The Year of Nine Battles
Wed 9th December	Lecture	Mark Corney	Villas, Churches and Baptisteries
2021			
Wed 13th January	Lecture	Sophy Charlton	Finding Mesolithic Britain: Biomolecular Approaches to Hunter-Gatherer Archaeology
Wed 10th February	Lecture	Paul Cheetham	300 Miles in the Footsteps of Vespasian – Lake Farm Roman legionary fortress
Wed 10th March	Lecture	AGM and members’ talk	Keeper’s Lodge – Andrew Morgan and Lilian Ladle
Wed 14th April	Lecture	Mike Allen	The Prehistoric Chalkland Landscape of Stonehenge, Avebury and Dorchester - tearing up the textbooks and starting again
Wed 12th May	Lecture	Julian Richards	Shaftesbury - Alfred's Town, Alfred's Abbey
EVENTS TO BE RESCHEDULED			
tbd	Tour	Devizes Museum	Led by museum director David Dawson
tbd	Walk	Cranborne Chase	9 mile walk from Martin Green’s farm looking at the history of the Chase, led by Alan Dedden
tbd	Day trip	London - Sir John Soane's Museum and the Museum of London (tbc)	Coach trip to visit two of London’s Museums

DISTRICT DIARY

Your information is very welcome, especially now
– do let me know of any events or if you hear groups are re-starting.
ALL EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS THEN IN FORCE

Sat 11th – Sun 19th July	Festival of Archaeology	CBA	Digital Events – see p.13 this newsletter
Tues 27th October	The origins of our species	Bournemouth University	Annual Pitt Rivers lecture by Prof. Chris Stringer (6:30 for 7:00) – see p.14 May Newsletter
Sat 24th Oct - Sun 1st Nov	Festival of Archaeology	CBA	Events on the ground – see p.13 this newsletter