East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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Founded 1983

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NEWSLETTER – October 2020

Editor's Notes

We're very grateful to Francis Taylor for giving our inaugural Zoom lecture on **Discovering the Maya**, summarised here. We're also pleased that so many joined us to watch it – 43 connections, so probably nearly 60 people allowing for couples. It went very well, both the interesting lecture and the many questions at the end, and I didn't hear of any connection problems. See below for the next Zoom lecture.

Your help is needed to try to stop an important Roman mosaic from Dorset from disappearing into a private collection abroad: **SAVE THE DEWLISH LEOPARD – It's time to do our part**.
Lilian has sent **An update on Druce Farm Roman Villa** and Vanessa has given us news on just one element of the extensive preparations aimed at re-opening the Museum of East Dorset later this month: **Black Sand** (!). Andrew reports on a small EDAS project: **EDAS - Wimborne All Hallows Project**.

Thanks to Gill Broadbent for her article about an important but little known Roman fort in the North Pennines: **Off the Beaten Track - In search of the Romans**. Thanks also to Neil Meldrum for the 3rd in his series on human evolution: **Humankind Finds its Creativity in the Upper Palaeolithic**; apologies that circumstances conspired so that it wasn't able to appear in the last newsletter.

We do have continuations of other series, with the 7th **Remembering the Romans** and another set of **Weblinks** and **Highlights** from Alan Dedden. I finally managed to check back and this will be the 32nd time he's provided us with links to items of interest on the internet (though not called Weblinks initially). There are also links to **News and Information from The Council for British Archaeology**. Lack of space means that *View from Above* doesn't appear this month, but it will be back.

Please send feedback and contributions to geoffnsue@hotmail.co.uk
NOT TO THE EDAS ADDRESS OR BY CLICKING 'REPLY'

Geoff Taylor

ZOOM LECTURE: Wednesday 14th October 7:30pm

This month we're very pleased to be able to host the well-known Andrew Birley, Director of Excavations for the Vindolanda Trust, on:

Recent Excavations at Vindolanda and Revealing Magna Roman Fort

(see June 2020 Interim Newsletter No. 4, p.12 for an introduction to the fort).

This was to have been our 7th joint lecture with the students' society at Bournemouth University, so staff and students from the university have been invited to join us.

We will send all EDAS members the ZOOM Link ID by email a few days before the event, accompanied by simple instructions about using ZOOM.

Non-members can request the Zoom Link ID from Andrew Morgan, email: andrewmorgz@aol.com

Discovering the Maya: Zoom lecture by Francis Taylor

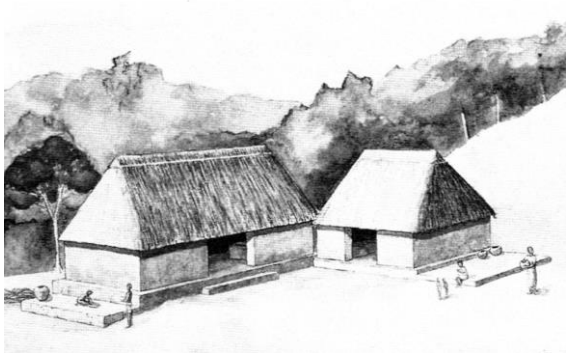
Francis's presentation introduced us to the Mayan world, particularly focussing on two of their great cities – Tikal and Copan. He included an introduction to the Mayan hieroglyphic script and to their complex calendar, areas that I can only briefly mention in a summary article like this. Francis also guaranteed that we would know, and be able to speak, one word in Mayan by the end of the talk.

The approximate boundaries of the Mayan world are shown on the map in green, covering the modern Central American countries of Guatemala and Belize, as well as parts of Mexico, Honduras and El Salvador. The map also shows the territory of the Olmecs (*c*.1200 – 400 BC), considered the precursor for all the Central American civilisations and probably the originators of the calendar used by the Mayans.

The *floruit* of the Mayan culture was *c*.800 BC – AD 900, though development of large cities with monumental architecture only began after 300 BC, whilst the smaller cities continued to be occupied up to the Spanish conquest. In fact, we should not see the Maya as lost, as 8m people sharing language and culture derived directly from Mayan fit well into the Mayan territory. Teotihuacan (*c*.100 BC – AD 700) was the largest city in the Western Hemisphere in its day and had a major influence on Mayan civilisation. The Aztecs, with their capital at Tenochtitlan (now mostly buried under Mexico City), actually came later – from about AD 1200.

The Mayan world was never unified, and was occupied by several different tribes speaking variants of a common language. They did, though, have many things in common, such as a complex calendar, hieroglyphic writing, human sacrifice and a complicated pantheistic religion. At the height of the 'Classic' Mayan period, from about AD 250, there were around 60 kingdoms, each ruled by a 'Holy Lord' and locked in perpetual struggles to dominate their neighbours. From time to time some rulers became overlords of other states, but this was always fairly short-lived.

Whilst Mesoamerica is extremely diverse, ranging from snow-capped mountains through rain forest to parched deserts, the Mayan territory avoided most of the extremes of heat and cold. The highlands to the south have better soils, allowing a field to be cropped for 15 years before 5 years of fallow. However, the poorer soils in the peninsular north only allow for a couple of years of crops before needing to be left for up to two decades. A 'slash and burn' approach was then needed on the regrown forest. The basic diet was the same in both areas – predominantly maize, as well as beans (grown up the stalks of harvested maize), squash and chili peppers. Maize is deficient in essential amino acids, which would have resulted in contracting the disease pellagra if the Mayans hadn't used the *nixtamal* technique: cooking the kernels with lime before grinding into a dough to make flatbreads like the modern tortilla.



The Mayans were essentially a Stone Age people for most of their history and lacked complex technologies. They also lacked suitable farm animals, so that their limited consumption of meat mainly came from hunting. Most of the population, perhaps as much as 90%, were farmers growing the staple crops. They don't feature in the inscriptions and are little known, though some rural farmsteads have been excavated, as in the reconstruction.

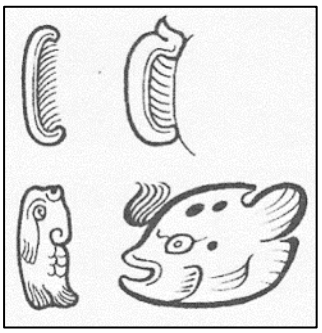
The complex Mayan creation myth is mainly known from the Popul Vuh, or 'Book of Counsel', passed on by oral tradition until first written down around 1550. It was based on the planting and harvesting cycle of the vitally important maize – planting the seed sends it to its death in the underworld but it is miraculously reborn and emerges from the earth. In the beginning there was a watery void with underworld gods and a pair of creator gods, Xpiyacoc and Xmucane (X is pronounced "sh"). They passed through various cycles of creation and destruction, with each world peopled by imperfect beings. The two sons of the creator gods, one of whom is the Maize God, Hun Hunahpu, fail the underworld gods' tests and are sacrificed, but the Maize God's head speaks to the daughter of one of the underworld gods and she gives birth to twins. They defeat the underworld gods, the Maize God is resurrected and emerges back on earth, here shown as a turtle, through a crack in the surface. Finally, the aged creator gods succeed in making people from maize dough.

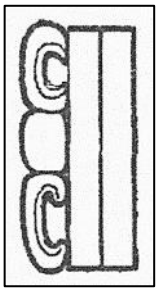
Several of the major Mayan cities can be visited in normal times, such as Palenque and Chichen Itza in Mexico, though Francis thinks that Tikal, in north-east Guatemala, probably gives the best impression of the glories of Mayan civilisation. At its peak in the 8th century it was probably the largest and most important, with 60,000 people and a dynastic succession of at least 33 rulers. But, like the other "cities", Tikal wasn't a city as we would understand it, rather a royal and ritual centre where most of the buildings were temples, palaces, astronomical observatories and ball courts (the rules of the ball game, which features in the creation myth, aren't actually very clear). They were places of conspicuous consumption, supported by the ordinary people who lived away from them.

The model shows what the main part of Tikal may have looked like at its height, stretching east from Temple 4, the tallest one at the top right, with ball courts visible towards the left (2 parallel buildings next to a small pyramid). There was, in fact, more of the city, mostly to the north.

The current view from Temple 4 only has the tops of 3 other temples visible; the jungle has reclaimed much of Tikal, as with the other Mayan cities. Clearance work does mean that more is visible at ground level, such as the 'Lost World' astronomical observatory platform far right (a nod to Arthur Conan Doyle). Its style is identical to pyramids in Teotihuacan, resulting from warriors invading in AD 378 and starting a new royal line, though they claimed descent from the previous kings. Carvings show other influences from Teotihuacan, such as 'goggle eyes' and dress styles.

Detailed information about Mayan history mainly comes from carved stone stelae picturing events and rulers, with descriptions in their hieroglyphic script and the dating in their calendar. The stelae in Tikal survived particularly well due to its relatively dry climate, especially around the Great Plaza shown here (centre of the model above). The Maya had a sign, or glyph, for each syllable, as well as pictograms to depict a word. These were often combined. Most syllables had more than one variant, with those for "ka" shown below, but scribes then had artistic licence as to how they wrote the glyphs. To make things more difficult, syllables weren't written in order but merged artistically into a picture. Perhaps surprisingly, most Mayan inscriptions can now be read.





Numbers have similar issues, though are based on the simple model of building up egg-like ovals or dots for 1s and bars for every 5. Blank spaces weren't liked, so were filled with curved shapes, as on the number 11 here, that can look like more 1s on worn inscriptions. And they may, instead, have shown the head of the god who was the patron of that number. Numbers are usually dates and rarely over 19 because of the way the calendar worked. Simplistically, there were 18 months of 20 days, the last being called the 'seating' day of the next month. The 'Wayeb', an unlucky period of 5 days, made up the year, but there were other counts covering 260 day and 52 year cycles. The 'Long Count', gave the year counting from 11th August 3114 BC, which the Mayans believed was the start of their current era. This was counted in a series of multiplicative numbers, the Bak'tun being the highest at 144,000 days; 20th December 2012 was the end of the 12th Bak'tun.

Perhaps the single most impressive collection of Mayan inscriptions is the Hieroglyphic Staircase at the city of Copan, in the far west of Honduras and almost at the edge of Mayan territory. When found, the jungle had toppled most of the blocks and reconstruction put them back in the wrong places, as it was done before the inscriptions were understood (serious efforts to translate them only really started in the 1950s). Work to find the correct order is ongoing.

Although a river has taken away some of the city, Copan retains many important monuments, particularly a temple that proved to have a complete shrine within it, the 'Rosilia' shown in the cut-away picture. Pyramids were often covered by further building, growing ever larger, but this usually destroyed much of what went before. Here, though, the shrine was carefully preserved, including the colours on its thick stucco covering. It clearly covers earlier buildings and was dedicated to the founder of Copan's dynasty, Yax K'uk Mo. Copan's recorded history starts much later than other Mayan cities with Yax K'uk Mo arriving from Mexico in AD 426, probably part of the new wave of rulers as in Tikal.

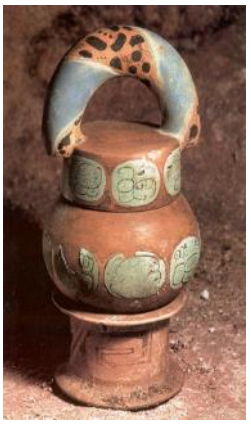
The Rosilia was the last building in Copan using stuccowork on this scale, because deforestation meant there was insufficient firewood to make lime from limestone, an issue in many places from repeatedly renewing plaster coverings on temples. This is one of the reasons for the collapse of Mayan civilisation, with the last recorded dates on inscriptions in most cities during the 9th and early 10th centuries, though rather later in a few northern cities like Chichen Itza (AD 1224). As well as overpopulation and overuse of resources bringing environmental degradation, the collapse could have resulted from a severe drought from AD 800-1050, constant warfare or a rejection of the ideology of kingship – increasing famine and disease meant that the rulers weren't doing their job so why should farmers continue to bear the burden? All are relevant, though probably at different times and in different places.

Among the many questions Francis answered, it was interesting to learn that the Mayan's depictions of people with large hooked noses and sloping foreheads was probably just an artistic convention (though both do exist in in a small minority of Maya today). Their long-distance trade was really just in jade and obsidian. I'll finish this summary with just a few of the photographs Francis showed.

A huge temple in Calakmul, Tikal's great rival (not Francis's photo as it is very hard to get there).

Jade vase from Tikal showing the Maize god.

Just one of the virtuoso, and eccentric, artworks of struck flint.



Ceramic chocolate drinking vessel from Rion Azul.

Oh, and the Mayan word is *KAKAWA* where the final vowel isn't pronounced = cacao in English, i.e. the seed from which cocoa is produced. It was very important to the Mayans, who made a frothy, spicy drink that was almost equivalent to our communion wine in the way it was used.

Geoff Taylor

SAVE THE DEWLISH LEOPARD – It's time to do our part

The Dewlish Leopard is one of the finest examples of Romano-British mosaic in the country. It captures the final moments of a gazelle in flight as it falls prey to a powerful leopard. In an authoritative article published in the latest edition of *Current Archaeology* (No. 367), mosaic expert Antony Beeson says it is outstanding and the most realistic rendition of an animal by a Romano-British artist in any medium.

The mosaic was discovered by Bill Putnam during the 1970s excavation of the Dewlish Roman Villa. After restoration it was retained and displayed in Dewlish House until 2018, when it was sold. Unfortunately it has since been resold to an unknown overseas buyer, subject to an export licence and the raising of sufficient funds to keep it in Britain. There is more information at this link.

We must try to retain this artwork for the country and, if possible, for the new Dorset County Museum, where it should be displayed with pride. **Is there a better image to engage schoolchildren in the complex history of the Romans in Britain?**

Not unexpectedly the applicant for the export licence has a contrary view and described the mosaic as "… an incomplete fragment on the course (*sic*) side…" and continued with "...the relevance to national history is lessened by the number of other examples already in national institutions and privately owned". If it is so unimportant, why was the buyer prepared to pay £135,000 for it? Antony Beeson clearly challenges the statement, and says there are no comparable examples to be found in Romano-British art.

What To Do?

If you agree that this work of art should be kept in the country then we must show that the people of Dorset recognise the importance of the Dewlish Leopard. Please register your objections by writing to either or both of the people below, and maybe to your MP (email is best as people are working from home). **But do it now – the deadline is 16th October**.

Export Licencing Unit Arts Council England 21 Bloomsbury Street London WC1B 3HF email: elu@artscouncil.org.uk	Caroline Dinenage Minister of State for Digital and Culture, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA email: caroline.dinenage.mp@partiament.uk

Please support this campaign (we await information about the fund raising initiative).

Andrew Morgan

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An update on Druce Farm Roman Villa

Some of you might be cursing 'lock-down' for all the missed opportunities to meet friends, socialise, travel etc., but it has done me a huge favour……. due to 'not going out' I have been busy preparing the results of our 2012-2018 excavations on the Roman Villa for publication and, in addition, chivvying up the specialists to produce reports for us.

I have scrutinised site records, plans, photographs and information on all the finds in order to come to conclusions on how the site developed over 450 years or so. I can now tell you with certainty that occupation on the villa site started VERY EARLY (about AD 50-60) and people were still living there in the 6th century. An early military association has also been confirmed.

An interesting fact is that all rubbish was disposed of on the site, initially in ditches and abandoned pits, then later in huge midden deposits. We thoroughly investigated all the pits, but only sampled the ditches and middens. Huge amounts of material must still be there…..

The archaeological text with relevant drawings and photographs has been completed, and we have most of the specialist reports. Over the years, Janet Bartlet has drawn thousands of finds, many of which will be used in the publication, and Mark Corney has already digitised many of the selected drawings.

The final task will be to draw together all the findings, and to compare Druce with other Dorset villas and sites from further afield. That is pencilled in for the winter months. Meanwhile, I am looking at the mortaria – large pottery bowls used for grinding, pulverising and mixing. These were unknown before the Romans came to Britain and introduced new foodstuffs which needed a new type of vessel for preparation. At Druce, there are mortaria brought from the continent by the army in the 1st century AD; by the 4th century demand was partly supplied by the New Forest potters, but mainly from Oxfordshire.

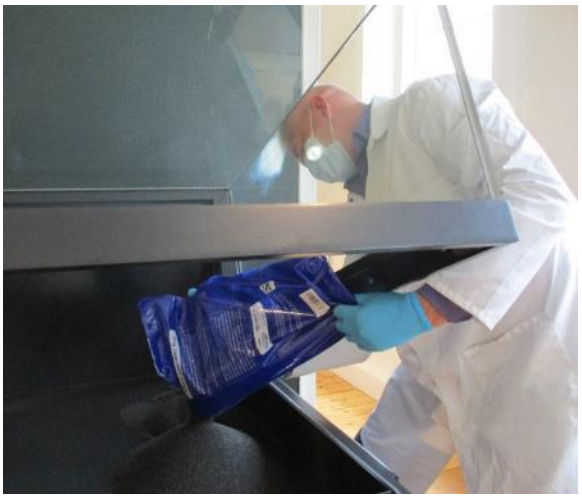
Lilian Ladle

Black Sand

Q. What is Vanessa doing with a boot-load of aquarium gravel?

A. EDAS kindly donated £100 to the Museum of East Dorset (previously the Priest's House Museum) as a gesture of support whilst the museum was unable to reopen as planned earlier this year. The money was finally spent last week and has gone towards the purchase of nine sacks of black sand, a type of aquarium gravel. This is being used to display one of the museum's most significant artefacts, the Iron Age TB skeleton, the earliest known case of TB ever found in Britain.

Andrew Morgan commented:
"The Museum of East Dorset performs a pivotal role in the local community in support of our shared objectives to promote and protect our cultural heritage. EDAS enjoys an excellent relationship with the museum and many of our members volunteer there on a regular basis. It's a real bonus that the money has gone towards exhibiting the Iron Age TB skeleton. We look forward to supporting the museum in the next phase of its story when it is open again."



Dr Martin Smith, Principal Academic in Forensic and Biological Anthropology at Bournemouth University, empties a sack of black sand into the new display case. This material has been in use at the Museum of London since 2008 to display human remains. The sand enables bones to be passively embedded and does not allow movement. It also negates the need for mounts and minimises the need for interventive conservation, as well as providing an aesthetically pleasing appearance.

… and then the first bones are laid in the black sand.

EDAS members will be able to see the Iron Age TB skeleton in the new Life and Death Gallery when the museum re-opens late October.

THANK YOU EDAS.

Vanessa Joseph

EDAS - Wimborne All Hallows Project

During the summer Peter Shand, a member of the general public, came across the overgrown graveyard of Wimborne All Hallows. He was inspired by its special qualities and volunteered his services to the Wimborne St Giles Parochial Church Council to clear the overgrowth that was covering the site. This offer was accepted, but he was asked to contact a local historical society to investigate the history of the site, and to try to locate the long demolished church. This was a time critical opportunity and EDAS agreed to run a small project.

The church at All Hallows is possibly mentioned in the Domesday Book but is definitely mentioned in the *Taxatio Ecclesiasticus* (as Wymborn Carentam) in 1291. It was the principal church in the area, with Wimborne St Giles just serviced by a chapel. In the 17th century, Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, 1st Earl of Shaftesbury, built a new country house close to Wimborne St Giles and, eventually, in 1732 the 4th Earl consolidated the All Hallows rectory with that at Wimborne St Giles. Shortly afterwards, the church at Wimborne All Hallows was demolished, just leaving the graveyard. With little room at Wimborne St Giles, the All Hallows churchyard continued to be used for burials up to the beginning of the 20th century, when a new cemetery was opened nearby. To this day it remains consecrated and open for burials (in theory, at least).

The site has been cleared on an irregular basis, not least in 2011 when a number of sycamore trees were removed, and it is revered locally for its annual display of snow drops. Peter has put in a huge amount of work to clear the site again so as to enable our access.

The project is being progressed in four parts:

a. **Historical Research**: assess the historical record about the church, the surrounding landscape and the families buried in the graveyard. The team will also collect anecdotal evidence from the local community.
b. **Graveyard Survey:** this involves locating and recording the gravestones and assessing all the graveyard features such as the entrance, the boundary wall and the significant trees.
c. **Archaeological Excavation**: a limited exploratory excavation will be undertaken to identify any remains of the demolished church. The intention is to reveal the footprint of any building and find evidence of the building's construction.
d. **Post Excavation:** the period when any finds are processed and analysed, the historical research completed and the publication is written up.

It is intended to complete all the field work by the end of November 2020 and the project should be completed by March 2021, subject to Covid-19 restrictions and access to relevant historical records.

A report will be prepared for the church describing all the findings and EDAS will provide an article for the proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society. The team will give a talk and provide a display to share our findings with the local community.

Andrew Morgan

Humankind Finds its Creativity in the Upper Palaeolithic

The Upper Palaeolithic era ran from *c*.60,000-12,000 years ago when the latest phase of the Ice Age started to fizzle out, it became appreciably warmer and the world entered the present geological period, the Holocene. In comparison to the last 12,000 years the Upper Palaeolithic has sometimes been seen as a period of stagnation, during which human development was very limited despite both the human genotype and the physiology of our brains probably having been fully developed over 100,000 years ago. Was there a reason for this comparatively slow growth, if such it was?

Perhaps, though physiologically 'complete', the human brain wasn't as 'fully wired' as our brains today. In my last article I talked about Autobiographical Memory, the ability to relive past events in the mind and project those events into future planning, which seems to have taken tens of thousands of years to mature. It is conceivable that, although physiologically developed, the human brain did not reach something approaching its present maturity until after 45,000 years ago. In biological evolutionary terms, Homo Sapiens may still be at a very early stage of development, but changes in our brains are quite imperceptible and seem to take place over many thousands of years. Perhaps we will be able to detect differences in another 25,000 years! The increasingly rapid changes in the way that we live over the last 12,000 years have been entirely down to human cultural evolution and the growth in human numbers, not down to any biological evolutionary process. For cultural evolution to proceed you need a critical mass of people.

So perhaps the apparently slow advancement of humanity during the Upper Palaeolithic relates to the final maturing of Autobiographical Memory, but also to the very tiny numbers of humans. And don't forget the climate – in these latter stages of the Ice Ages it was cold. It is no coincidence that the process of cultural evolution greatly accelerated as the climate became more benign after 10,000 BC and populations expanded. In all probability, the more of humanity there is, the quicker any biological evolutionary processes will occur.

However, in spite of the low number of people, and the probability that our brains had not yet fully matured, our ancestors left Africa and started roaming the planet around 65,000 years ago. These weren't rapid movements, though: if the first groups reached Australia after about 15,000 years, that meant travelling less than a mile a year (the route shown from central Africa to north-western Australia is under 10,000 miles). It seems most unlikely that our ancestors thought of this as a migration in the modern sense.

From about 40,000 years ago a major innovation occurred in our ancestors, perhaps an indication that, at last, Autobiographical Memory was reaching maturity. This was the comparatively sudden proliferation of pictorial and sculptural art. There is certainly evidence of a human artistic trait 100,000 years ago, e.g. beads and shells as pendants or necklaces, modified pieces of flint which could resemble a mask, even possibly very primitive forms of representational art. But from 40,000 years ago figurative art, in the sense that we would understand it, bursts on the scene (well, bursts is probably an exaggeration). Homo Sapiens has now clearly separated from his erstwhile hominid cousins.

The 'Lion Man' from Germany, a *c*.40,000 year old carving of mammoth ivory showing a man with a cave lion's head (31cm high).

From this time, in addition to pictorial and sculptured art, we also see the development of far more sophisticated tools, of needles and sewn clothing, of lamps and throwing spears, as well as the use of bone and ivory in the manufacture of tools. Ornamentation and stone sculptures also became far more sophisticated, particularly in relation to burials. Probably later, around 20,000 BC, there is evidence of fish-hooks and netting, bows and arrows, counting recorded on bones, as well as extensive trade networks.

The 'Lady of Brassempouy' from France. Carved in mammoth ivory over 25,000 years ago and thought to be the earliest known realistic representation of a human face (3.65cm high).

One of the stranger features of the later Upper Palaeolithic period is the proliferation, especially in Europe, of the so called 'Venus Figurines'. As always, there are many theories as to what they may represent, though they clearly show some form of exaggerated female features. I like to think that they represent an exaltation of womanhood and female fecundity (which became rather lacking in later Human society).

Venus Figurines: from left, Les Pugues (France, mammoth ivory), Dolní Věstonice (Czech Republic, ceramic) and, probably the most famous, Willendorf (Austria, limestone). These are between 11 and 15cm high, and date from *c*.25-30,000 years ago, 10,000 years after the earliest Venus - the rather cruder 'Venus of Hohle Fels' from Germany.

Changes in both the frequency of burial and in burial practices may also be an indication of the maturing of Autobiographical Memory. There is evidence of Homo Sapiens' burials going back to 100,000 years ago. Hominids had, of course, been dying for millions of years, but up until about 100,000 years there is little trace of burial (but, intriguingly, there is some evidence of earlier skull burial). After that date, down to around 35,000 years ago, there is clear evidence of burial, although not a great deal. During this period red ochre appears to have been used quite extensively on the body, possibly considered a substitute for blood. Simple grave goods were also deposited, usually bodily bead ornamentation.

Although it was initially considered that Neanderthals did not bury their dead, there are now clear indications of Neanderthal burial. It has been suggested that burial was not a usual Neanderthal practice because Neanderthals could not have any belief system. However, as yet we have not devised any means of ascertaining Neanderthal thought processes, any more than we have of early Humankind's thought processes. We do not know what made Neanderthals tick, and I feel that it is a little disingenuous to our Neanderthal cousins to suggest that Neanderthal burials were simply an effort to emulate their Homo Sapiens cousins.

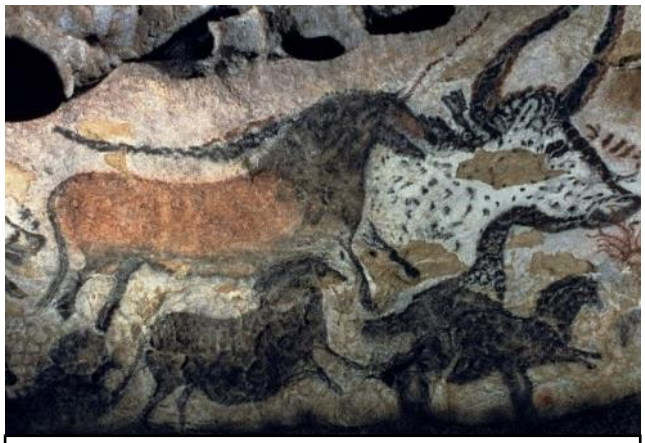
From 35,000 years ago burials became far more prolific, varied and increasingly elaborate in terms of grave goods. So as far as our ancestors were concerned, did this proliferation of burials and grave goods indicate a growing fear of death, and a view that an afterlife was possible. Was it, perhaps, an initial impetus for the development of religious ideas (or, perhaps more accurately, of superstition), or did such ideas develop earlier and lead to the increase in burials and deposition of grave goods?

A *c*.30,000 year old burial from Sungir, Russia (reconstituted for museum display).

Whilst it is impossible to be sure, we might consider whether a fear of death came to dominate our ancestors' minds? Most modern psychologists contend that an individual's self-esteem and worldview are shaped by many factors, death being only one of them. On the other hand, Terror Management Theory, recently put forward by a group of psychologists, maintains that fear of death dominates all our thinking and activities. Personally, I am with the former camp and feel that fear of death dominated our ancestors' thinking no more or less than it dominates our own thinking.

If the view is that Autobiographical Memory was only fully developed in Homo Sapiens' brains around 40,000 years ago, then it seems entirely possible that pictorial art and a more structured set of superstitions, and hence more elaborate burials, may have coalesced in human thought processes at about the same time. The result may have been not so much that fear of death dominated, but rather a concern about the unknown aftermath that death brings about.

As already mentioned, there is an abundance of models, sculptured figurines and all kinds of decorated objects, in many materials, emanating from this period. However, cave painting is probably the best known and most extensive example of Humankind's artistic revolution and early mental dexterity. Most of the cave painting found so far has been in Europe, particularly south-west France and northern Spain, probably because, until fairly recently, it has been mostly Europeans who have been interested in finding and dating these discoveries. The very earliest cave paintings in Europe are often not figurative, whilst the most famous paintings tend to be less than 40,000 years old. There are, though, much older figurative cave paintings, including some of those now being found in parts of south-east Asia.



Cave paintings at Lascaux, France, 17-19,000 years old.

Dwarf buffalo from Sulawesi, Indonesia, *c*.40,000 years old.

The first examples of this figurative art don't appear before 40,000 years ago (though the buffalo above has been claimed to be up to 44,000 years old), and clearly show that our ancestors had mastered the ability to recreate mental images. The prevailing view has been that this was not achieved by Neanderthals, who had disappeared from Europe by 40-35,000 years ago, nor by any of our other hominid cousins, although this view is now being challenged. There does now appear to be evidence of Neanderthal art but, as with burial, the jury is still out as to whether this art is a Neanderthal creation or Neanderthals trying to emulate their Homo Sapiens cousins.

Pictorial art is a clear indication of our ancestors' ability to project their mental processes visually. At this stage our ancestors were presumably quite capable of conveying complex thoughts to their brethren through speech, but conveying these thoughts through pictorial art was an entirely new and innovative concept and, it was originally thought, one peculiar to humanity. In my next article I will recount some of the present theories which try to explain this art and how it might have kickstarted a form of religious belief.

Neil Meldrum

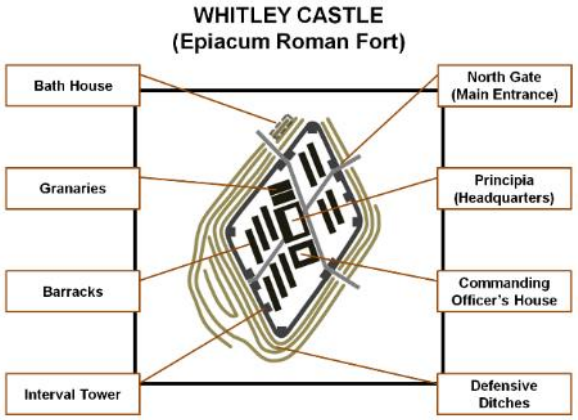
Off the Beaten Track - In search of the Romans

The small market town of Alston is situated 1,000 feet above sea level in a wild, windswept area of the North Pennines on the Cumbrian/Northumbrian border. Two miles north of Alston, by the side of the A689, can be found the little-known Roman Fort of Whitley Castle, identified as *Epiacum* in Ptolemy's *Geography*. The reason why a fort was built in such a remote area of the north, although there is no definite proof, is generally accepted to be due to the deposits of lead and silver ore that exist in the area.

Lead was an important commodity to the Romans, who used it for many purposes from the manufacture of water pipes to paint, and even in cosmetics. The presence of such an ore in the region would have been known to them, particularly as the ore in this area has a higher than usual silver content. In fact, mining of lead on the Alston Moor is thought to have started on a small scale during the Bronze Age, and it continued through the Roman occupation right up until the 1960s, when the last mine at Nenthead closed.

The fort is half way along the Maiden Way, a 20 mile road which connected *Bravoniacum*, the fort at Kirkby Thore near Penrith, with Hadrian's Wall at Carvoran (*Magna*), well placed to support the production and transport of the ore.

Today the fort is part of Castle Nook Farm, managed by its owners and well worth a visit. Even the mist and rain on the day we visited did not dampen our enjoyment of the site. Although it does not have the slick facilities of an English Heritage managed site, it has a charm of its own with sufficient facilities for an enjoyable visit, helped by the surrounding wild unspoilt scenery and the newly opened café (carrot cake especially tasty). We were lucky enough to meet the enthusiastic owner of the farm, who gave us details of their plans and proposals for the future presentation and management, which includes improving access and providing an increase in the information available to visitors.



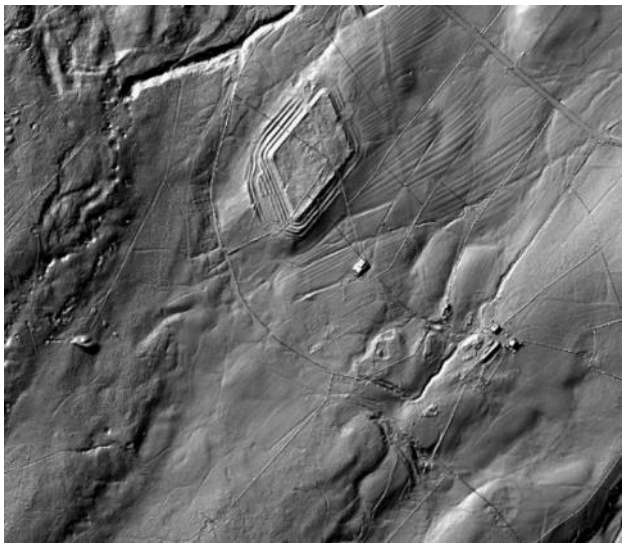
Although not so clear in the aerial photograph, the plan above shows the shape of the fort, which was built in about AD120, to be an unusual diamond – constructed to take advantage of the landscape. The external dimensions are approximately 136m by 108m and the internal area, including the internal rampart, is 1.24 hectares (just over 3 acres).

The surrounding multiple ramparts are spectacular and very well preserved. There are two complete circuits of embanked ditches separated from the wall by a narrow berm, but the most spectacular earthworks are those shown here on the south west side, where there are no less than 7 banks and ditches.

There is a gateway in the middle of each wall with the main gateway, the Porta Praetoria, facing north east directly towards the Maiden Way about 100m away. The gateways are connected by internal roadways, and geophysical surveys show the expected barrack blocks and granaries, as well as the headquarters and commanding officer's house. The lesser banks and ditches on the northern side are shown in the photograph, with those on the north east corner of the fort actually flattened and a bathhouse added. It is thought that a stone paved parade ground may have existed outside the south west corner, and a vicus on the west side of the fort.

Luckily, although the fort was known about back in the 16th and 17th centuries, its remote location seems to have saved it from the attentions of later antiquarians and today it remains generally undisturbed. The first planned excavation was conducted in about 1810 when the bathhouse was examined, but this was poorly recorded. Two further small excavations were undertaken in 1957 and 1958 by Durham University. These examined the outer defences on the northern side and a small area of the interior of the fort. Latterly the dry-stone farm wall running through the middle of the interior has been removed and the artefacts found are currently being analysed and conserved to become part of a permanent display in the café building. There are currently no plans to conduct any further excavations within the fort itself, but there are plans afoot to investigate what is possibly an Iron Age settlement close by.

Since the 18th century a number of altars and dedication inscriptions have been found during general work on the farm; eight are included in the *Roman Inscriptions of Britain* database but the whereabouts of only three are known. From the inscriptions, it is believed that the fort was garrisoned by the Second Cohort of Nervians, raised from Nervii tribe in Gallia Belgica (from central Belgium down to the north of France). Analysis of the votive stonework found suggests the cult of Mithras was followed at the fort. However, although there have been suggestions as to the location of a Mithraeum, so far one has not been identified.



The area in which the fort lies also contains reminders of inhabitants who lived there centuries before the Roman invasion, and of those who came after. Within the fort itself are the remains of two "bastle houses", with another close by incorporated into the now derelict building known as Holymire. These buildings were constructed with stone from the fort as protection in the days of the lawless Border Reiver times of the 13th to 17th centuries. Castle Nook farmhouse today lies outside the fort to the north east, but until the 19th century the original farmhouse lay within the north west corner, again constructed with robbed stone.

In 2009 the fort and immediate area was the subject of a research investigation by Dave Went and Prof. Stewart Ainsworth on behalf of English Heritage. Their comprehensive report entitled *Whitley Castle, Tynedale North: An archaeological Investigation of the Roman Fort and its setting (Research Department Report Series No 89-2009)* is available on-line here for those who are interested in reading more.

Gill Broadbent

Web Link Highlight September 2020

My background in electronics has given me a sceptical approach to any use of the term 'AI'. It should be used to describe a computer programme that 'learns' from successive runs of the programme by monitoring the result and adjusting the programme. Sadly it became normal for journalists to use AI to describe anything that used a computer (usually a microcomputer) to carry out some operation. Despite this, I found the attempt to recreate the features of Roman emperors striking. Obviously I have no idea if these images are true to the emperors they portray, but they certainly give life to otherwise bland statues. The approach described is rigorous and has the key features of AI, and the selection of which statues and other sources to use makes total sense, so the results should be close to life. The sadness may be that there are few other historic figures with sufficient likenesses to repeat this interesting exercise.

Within minutes of writing the above, I came across the item featuring Julian Richards. The mystery for me is why this item has appeared now, almost a year after it featured on 'Digging for Britain'. Modesty forbids me from revealing who actually uncovered the head.....

Alan Dedden

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September Weblinks

Oldest Christian Graffiti Found At Vindolanda
https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/aug/29/hadrians-wall-dig-reveals-oldest-christian-graffiti-on-chalice

Chance Find Of Roman Temple Foundation On Malta
https://archaeology-world.com/roman-temple-foundation-uncovered-in-malta/

Bronze Age Britons Kept Parts Of Dead Relatives As Keepsakes
https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/sep/01/bronze-age-britons-keepsakes-parts-dead-relatives-archaeologists

Sheffield Castle Excavations
https://www.wessexarch.co.uk/our-work/sheffield-castle

Viking Board Game
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/metal-detectorist-viking-board-game-lincolnshire-hnefatafl-torksey-auction-b421635.html

Reason Canaanite Palace Abandoned 3,700 Years Ago Finally Discovered
https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/09/canaanite-palace-abandoned-archaeologists-finally-know-why/

Dig Reveals One Of The Largest Roman Temples In Britain
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-54031373

Footprints May Be Earliest Evidence Of Humans On Arabian Peninsula
https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/sep/17/seven-footprints-may-be-the-earliest-evidence-of-humans-on-the-arabian-peninsula

DNA Study Shows Viking Was A Job Description
https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/09/viking-was-job-description-not-matter-heredity-massive-ancient-dna-study-shows

Scottish Medieval Coin Found In Norfolk Declared Treasure
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-54118509

27 Sarcophagi Unearthed In Saqqara
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-54227282

New Species Of Burrowing Dinosaur Found In China
https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/technology/new-species-of-burrowing-dinosaur-found-perfectly-preserved-in-cretaceous-pompeii/ar-BB19fGAg?ocid=msedgdhp

Dog Remains Found At 8400 Year Old Burial Site In Sweden
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8768503/Sweden-Bones-dog-Stone-Age-burial-site.html

AI Used To Produce Images Of Roman Emperors
https://www.livescience.com/ai-roman-emperor-portraits.htmlhttps://www.livescience.com/ai-roman-emperor-portraits.html

Iron Age Warrior Woman Burial Found In Siberia
https://www.livescience.com/iron-age-burial-with-weapons-siberia.html

Stone Age Skull With Evidence Of Failed Brain Surgery Found In Spanish Cave
https://www.livescience.com/stone-age-skull-trepanation-brain-surgery.html

Mystery Royal Stone Head Found At Shaftesbury
https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/oct/01/mystery-stone-head-shaftesbury-abbey-julian-richards-king-edward

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

News and Information from The Council for British Archaeology

An update on the CBA's **Festival of Archaeology**, part II (on the ground) can be viewed at THIS LINK; they remain hopeful that some physical events can still take place during the week starting 24th October, despite Coronavirus restrictions. The link also provides information about Part I, the digital week in July, and further links to allow you to catch up with what you may have missed. This is well worth a look.

The October Newsletter from CBA Wessex can be found HERE, and there's also their latest quiz on identifying historic sites abroad at Quiz 6. How many of the sites do you know (but don't scroll down too quickly as the answers are at the bottom)? And can you spot the spelling mistakes?

Is that butter?

No, it's Stonehenge!

I can't believe it's not butter

(with thanks to ***Peter Walker***)

This reminded me of a story Alan Dedden told me:

This was told to Alan by a civil engineer (now retired) involved in the construction of the previous car park and visitor entrance at Stonehenge. His colleague – let's call him John – phoned the quarry in Somerset to order hardcore for the car park. He quickly realised the person he was talking to was, shall we say, inexperienced, so John asked him if they broke rocks at the quarry to which the reply was "of course, why do you ask?". John then told him that there were about 50 rocks of between 4 and 40 tons on site that could go for breaking up.

A little while later a more senior person at the quarry (who knew John of old) rang back and asked to talk to John. "You #@?£%$& - I've got 10 lorries on the road to Stonehenge that I now have to somehow get back!"

REMEMBERING THE ROMANS VII

We left the previous article with my view that ages on epitaphs were often inaccurate, and perhaps not even known with any certainty by the commemorators. This even seems to have applied to the parents of some quite young people, and it looks as if ages might then have been chosen to emphasise the stage of life of the departed. This was often done in a visually striking way, as with Cretonia of 4 years, 4 months and 4 days in the previous article.

One feature of epitaphs for children which, not surprisingly, becomes rarer with increasing age is the recording of apparently accurate months, days and even hours of life, when you have to wonder who might have actually known such details. As above, another device apparently designed to draw attention is repetition – the same number of months and days (rarely hours) as years. Clearly this wouldn't work for anyone older than 12, and not just for the months – the Romans divided each of day and night into 12 hours, which varied in length through the year, so wouldn't count hours beyond 12.

D.M.
Q. POSTVMIVS APOLLINARIS
VIXIT ANNIS VIII M.VIII D.VIII ORIS V

Quintus Postumius Apollinaris, said to have been 8 years, 8 months and 8 days old, but 5 hours. CIL 6.24852 Rome (shortened)

D.M. SPECVL FRATRI
PIENTISSIMO V. AN.XVIII H.XI
IVLIA RESTITVTA FECIT

An epitaph for Speculus (?), the most dutiful brother who lived 18 years and 11 hours. Julia Restituta (sister) had this made. CIL 6.07514 Rome

To complicate things further there are a few epitaphs where the hours are stated in a way that implies they're the actual time of passing, rather than the age, such as HORA PRIMA, i.e. "the first hour" (probably of the day) or HORA NOCTIS VI, i.e. "the sixth hour of the night". Perhaps, then, recording hours is not so inaccurate as it might appear.

Another means of drawing attention to an epitaph was by emphasising a birthday, usually that the person hadn't quite reached it, but sometimes that they'd just passed their birthday. For Speculus, above, we have the ultimate, that he's said to have died during his 18th birthday. Perhaps the best example is one from Rome (CIL 5.09238) for Experantius, who is shown as almost reaching 100 with a precision that is clearly highly unlikely: 99 years, 11 months and 28 days. I'll return to the issue of exaggeration at older ages in a later article.

TERENTIA ALBANA ANN.
XXV MENS XI DIES XIV
MINVS QVAM ANN XXVI

Terentia Albana died aged 25 years and 11 months, but the epitaph then emphasises that this was only 14 days from her 26th birthday. CIL 6.27227 Rome

For the Romans, 18 didn't have the same significance as it does now, but it's difficult to know exactly what milestones they did use. As I've said, childhood ended at the legal age of puberty, i.e. 12 for girls and 14 for boys. However, another source says that boys became young men (*adulescentes* or *iuvenes*) at about 17, when they were eligible for military service and could act as citizens in the forum. The change was marked, at least for the better off who could afford such things, by the loss of their protective pendant (*bulla*) and *toga praetexta* (as shown), then wearing the *toga virilis*. Men were only considered fully adult at 25, when they could legally hold public office and conduct business. There seems to have been no rite of passage for females except on marriage; they clearly could not be citizens and didn't serve in the military.

I'll look further at the importance of these transitions in the next article.

Geoff Taylor

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 14th October	Zoom Lecture	**Andrew Birley**	Recent Excavations at Vindolanda and Revealing Magna Roman Fort
Wed 11th November	Zoom Lecture	**Wayne Bartlett**	AD871 - The Year of Nine Battles
Wed 9th December	Zoom 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.
ALL EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS THEN IN FORCE
(Local societies may have events, but they're not generally advertised beyond members)

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; **I've found nothing to say this has been cancelled**.
Sat 24th Oct - Sun 1st Nov	Festival of Archaeology	**CBA**	Events on the ground – see p.13 June newsletter & update p.15 this newsletter
Sat 14th Nov	The Anglo-Saxon Agricultural Revolution in Norfolk	**SHARP**	One day online conference, **free but you need to register** – see p.12 September newsletter