East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER – April 2021

Editor's Notes

Happy Easter to everyone, at least at the time of writing – it will no doubt be over by the time you read this. I hope everyone has been able to take advantage of the lovely weather (but the gardens need rain).

This month's Zoom meeting is Julian Richard telling us about Shaftesbury on Wednesday 14th April at 7:30 – how a team of mostly novice volunteers investigated this important Saxon town and its abbey. The Zoom link will, of course, be sent out a few days prior.

You'll find a summary of last month's **Annual General Meeting 10th March 2021** below, but first there's Andrew's write-up of the talk he gave following the meeting on the project EDAS undertook in 2019: **EDAS Archaeological Research Excavation, Keeper's Lodge, Kingston Lacy.**

Alan Dedden's **Weblinks** and **Highlights** are here for the 38th time, first appearing in October 2017, but hardly ever benefitting from suggested items from members. If you do see something interesting, just copy and paste the title and website address and send to Alan at alan.dedden@gmail.com.

Vanessa Joseph has provided a short article, **The Building as Museum Artefact**, on features revealed during the restoration of the Priest's House Museum in Wimborne to become The Museum of East Dorset, the subject of a Zoom talk later this month. Other short items in this issue give links to further talks and events that may be of interest, and there's also a note about **Plans to improve Dorset's Heritage Environment Record** further down.

Thank you to Neil Meldrum for the 8th article in his series on human spiritual evolution: **Ancient Egypt - The Pharaoh Becomes Supreme**, having skipped last month because of space issues. It was going to be 'Into the Urban World 2…', following on from the previous piece on Mesopotamia, but Ancient Egypt wasn't quite as urban and this title is more appropriate to the subject matter.

The series on Roman epitaphs was also skipped last month, but returns with a rather longer than usual article concentrating on just one epitaph: **Remembering the Romans XI**. **View from Above 36** continues the series; though started a couple of months earlier than Alan's Weblinks, less in number because of missing a few months.

And finally, another item from Vanessa, about something I'd never heard of that she learnt of in an unusual way: **Isolation and disinfectant – a story which spans the centuries.**

Contributions and feedback to me, please – you can just 'REPLY' to the email

Geoff Taylor

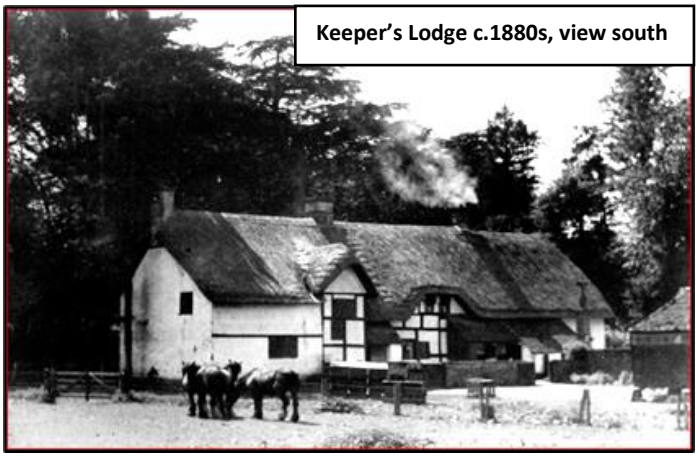
EDAS Archaeological Research Excavation, Keeper's Lodge, Kingston Lacy: Zoom lecture by Andrew Morgan.

In autumn 2019 EDAS carried out an archaeological excavation at Keeper's Lodge on the Kingston Lacy Estate on behalf of the National Trust (NT) and David Smith, the long-standing tenant. The property contains a delightful timber-framed house dated to 1563 and several outbuildings, set in extensive gardens and surrounded by woodland to the north and east. The objective was to investigate a number of buildings that are no longer standing but feature on historical maps and documents, including four large out-buildings (possibly barns) near the house and a building 250m away near the entrance to the property, known as Rabby's Dairy.

Keeper's Lodge is 2 miles north-west of Wimborne Minster off the B3082 road to Blandford Forum. It is set in the undulating chalk landscape that stretches northwards to Cranborne Chase and North Dorset. The Lodge is positioned on the south side of a shallow valley with a small chalk stream that flows eastwards into the River Allen, and the River Stour runs a short distance to the south.

A Royal manor was established by the West Saxons in the early 8th century. This was thought to be at nearby Abbott's Copse, but discussions after the talk agreed that it was more likely at Dean's Court, adjacent to the Saxon monastery. The first manor house at Kingston Lacy was a medieval courtyard house, probably built in the 12th century, just north of the present house. It was probably a hunting lodge for the extensive deer parks extending to Cranborne Chase. By 1493 it had been abandoned and, in 1603, James I gifted the manor to Sir Charles Blount, then it was sold to the Bankes family in 1635.

The origins of Keeper's Lodge can be traced back to the 12th century when, for strategic reasons, a small parcel of land from the estate was given to Sherborne Abbey during the civil war between Stephen and Matilda. There are numerous historical and present day references to this ecclesiastical estate, such as Abbott Street and the medieval hamlet of Abbottingtun, with several derivations such as Rabby's Moor and Rabby's Dairy. It is believed that a substantial house would have been built to manage the land. The land was returned to the Crown during the Reformation in 1547, after which the property was referred to as Kingston Hall Farm. The building we now know as Keeper's Lodge was built *c*.1563, and a manorial survey of the time noted '*a faire house newly erected with a court close, granary and dove house … with three great barns, stys, stables and severall others'.*



Keeper's Lodge c.1880s, view south

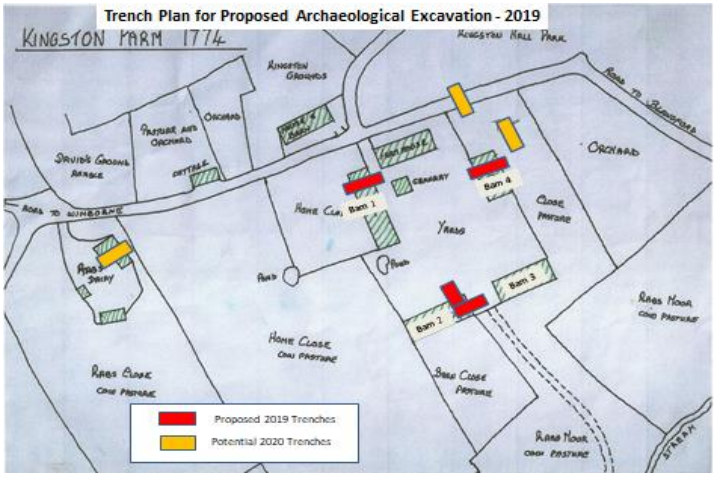
There are several oak beams and two fine stone fireplaces within the house that the Royal Commission recognised as medieval in origin (*c*.12th century), possibly recovered from the ruins of the original Kingston Lacy Manor House. Estate records mention that in 1750 a timber-framed extension was built onto the western end which still stands. The photograph dated to the 1880s also features a stone built extension on the eastern end that was demolished around 1960. In 1774 William Woodward was employed to survey and map the estate. He noted that Kingston Farm had previously been referred to as Rabby's Farm.

Following the Inclosure Act of 1784 the farm was closed and the land incorporated into the park of the Kingston Lacy Estate. The surrounding area was landscaped to support hunting, with the farmhouse and its outbuildings converted to also support hunting activities and re-named 'Keeper's Lodge'. The old Wimborne to Blandford road, which had run immediately south of the farm, was re-routed to the north and is the present day B3082. The associated outbuildings and the nearby Rabby's Dairy appear to have been demolished within a 40 year period, as they feature on the Tithe Map of 1847 but are absent from the second edition OS Map of 1887.

We were delighted that Ian Willis visited the site during our excavation as, during the early 20th century, the house was occupied by members of his family. Sadly Ian has since passed away, but we recall with great pleasure his amusing anecdotes and his invaluable recollections regarding the house and gardens. The grounds were then managed intensively for growing fruit and vegetables, which explains the deep, rich humic soil found throughout the garden. By the 1970s, Keeper's Lodge had been uninhabited for several years and had fallen into serious disrepair. With the support of Henry Ralph Bankes, David and Sally Smith became tenants and began the enormous task of restoration. In 1981 Bankes died and he bequeathed his extensive holdings, including the Kingston Lacy Estate, to the National Trust.

A geophysical survey was undertaken by Dave Stewart using both resistivity and magnetometry. The area was restricted by garden features and woodland, so that only the south and west and part of the area to the east could be fully surveyed. Neither method produced conclusive evidence of structures.

An invitation for volunteers was sent to all EDAS members and 43 people signed up, several with no previous experience. The excavation started on September 10th 2019 and was completed by the 27th. Five areas were examined: Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were positioned over the potential locations of the putative barns, Trench 4 was in the woodland in the area of Rabby's Dairy and Trench 5 was added later at the east side of Keeper's Lodge. Field records comprising a Site Record, Graphics Record, Special Finds Register, Levels Register and a Photographic Record were maintained. Plans were drawn at 1:100, 1:20 and 1:10; sections at 1:10. Finds were washed on site, counted, weighed and the results entered in a Context Finds Record; the information was later entered on an Excel spread sheet.



Topsoil from Trenches 1, 2 and 4 was removed by Robert and his trusty 60 year old JCB. Trenches 3 and 5 were opened by hand. During the excavation Karen and Peter undertook metal detector surveys.

Trench 1 to the east of Keeper's Lodge was initially 9x4.5m but then extended by four adjoining 2x1m areas. A quantity of clinker and bricks was found at the west end of the trench, concentrated in two parallel ruts running roughly south-west to north-east. We concluded that these were probably created by a heavy wheeled vehicle, possibly a traction engine. At the east end, two linear features were detected but were found to be modern service trenches.


John, Brian, Alan and Gill


Alan recording

There is tentative evidence for structural remains in the form of a brick/stone feature. The presence of chalk bedrock found just below the topsoil confirms that the floor of any building would have been on or just above this natural surface. However, the area has been badly compromised by 19th & 20th century activity.

Trench 2 was sited to the north of Keeper's Lodge, investigated to potentially locate remains of two barns and a trackway. A trench measuring 11x15m was initially cleaned to a depth of 0.03m and revealed a distinct chalk layer stretching 4m from the north end of the trench. This was thought to be a potential chalk floor! The remaining 7m was completely filled with modern building material brought

into the site and abandoned. Unfortunately the chalk layer proved to be the cap to a 1970s midden. However, the trench and extensions did yield 28 sherds of medieval pottery and 23 of Verwood pottery.

Vanessa and Gill with Phil, Heather and John

Heather and Gill examine a 1970's whisk

Initially Trench 3 comprised two 1m^2 trenches that were opened by hand and located next to the patio west of the garage. Later another was opened in the lawn**.** No archaeological features were identified and all contained very few finds. It was concluded that the garden area has seen much alteration and disturbance in recent years, which has severely compromised the stratigraphy of the site. Whilst the evidence for occupation over many centuries is evident, clear and conclusive evidence for a particular building remains elusive.

Sue and Ian

Trench 4 was opened in coppiced woodland located by the entrance to Keeper's Cottage. The area was investigated in an attempt to locate any remains from the post-medieval 'Rabby's Dairy' or its medieval antecedent. Four areas were targeted, with three (4A, 4B and 4C) initially cleared by mechanical excavator.

Len working hard with Agnieszka

Maryanne, Sue, David, Janet and Lilian watching Simon clear the trench

Trench 4E was opened by trowel to investigate a tree throw that had exposed building material. Being next to a public path meant its size was restricted to 1x2m and 0.5m deep. Excexcavation revealed a chalk surface which was thought to be a possible floor. In the trench, red bricks were found but not bonded into a structure, as well as strips of lead used for window glazing. The presence of window lead and brick suggest part of a collapsed wall with a window opening; the chalk surface could, then, be either a floor or part of the foundations. Large quantities of medieval pottery suggest activity in the area. The post-medieval pottery, particularly the Verwood type, are likely to have derived from activities centred on Rabby's Dairy. Remnants of building material in Trench 4E are likely to relate to the demolition of this building.

Trench 4E with chalk layer and discarded bricks

We also took the opportunity to open Trench 5 to investigate the eastern end of Keeper's Lodge, demolished in the 1960s. An L-shaped trench was excavated with a maximum length of 4.7m and a width of 2.3m. Substantial remains of the eastern wall foundations of the demolished building survived - two courses of heathstone blocks infilled with rubble, a construction that suggests it may be part of an earlier structure, perhaps pre-dating the 1563 building. A brick drain was found on the south side of the

foundations, the bricks suggesting a 19th century origin for this work. Finds were all 19th or 20th century.

During post-excavation work the finds were classified and recorded by quantity and weight. Medieval pottery dating to the 12th-14th centuries confirms activity during the Abbot of Sherborne's ownership of this part of the estate. The assemblage comprises mostly jars and bowls and is relatively low-status material associated with agricultural activities. The medieval pottery is being processed by Wessex Archaeology and the Verwood-type pottery is being scrutinized by Dan Carter. Overall most of the finds are 18-19th century in date and typical of the farming families who lived here over the centuries. In the later 20th century, rubbish from the estate and beyond was being brought in for levelling with the result that many of the modern finds cannot be absolutely attributed to this site.

Evidence was slight for the presence of any structural elements of the 'agricultural' buildings recorded on the 1774 Woodward plan. Possible structural and floor elements were recorded in Trench 1 and, in Trench 2, a layer of chalk with clay may have been a remnant floor deposit, but both of these trenches were heavily compromised by late 19th/20th century large-scale dumping of rubbish. Trench 4E provided a potential chalk floor and some building material, possibly related to the demolition of Rabby's Dairy between 1847 and 1887. That only fragments of brick remain suggests that re-usable material may have been removed and further material may survive in the woodland west of that trench. The thorough excavation of Trenches 4A, 4B and 4C confirmed that no buildings had ever been located in those areas. The foundations of heathstone blocks in Trench 5 relate to a demolished extension of Keeper's Lodge and, though it's not currently possible to date this building, it may pre-date the present Keeper's Lodge.

An interim report has been written and presented to the National Trust, as will be the project archive of paper, digital and photographic records and all the finds.

We are indebted to David and Sally Smith who encouraged us to dig up their wonderful garden and provided superb facilities. Martin Papworth and Nancy Grace of the National Trust are thanked for their advice and support and Tim Turner, the National Trust Estate Manager of Kingston Lacy, for his permission.

Thank you to all the volunteers, and to Lindsey Dedden for feeding us on cake!

Andrew Morgan

Annual General Meeting 10th March 2021

The reports and the accounts were circulated before the meeting and were accepted by the members.

Ian Richardson (Membership Secretary) retired by rotation and offered himself for re-election. A nomination was also received from Phil D'Eath, who was co-opted 15 February 2021 and offered himself as a trustee if elected. The members voted unanimously to elect both, and we are pleased to welcome Phil to fill the last committee vacancy. The committee members are listed below for information.

Peter mentioned that he has now reduced the number of members who have not provided a Gift Aid form nor confirmed that they aren't taxpayers to 8. All have been sent forms and reply-paid envelopes, [**so if you are one of the 6 still outstanding please reply as soon as possible**].

Andrew thanked all those who help to make EDAS a continuing success, not least the members for their continuing support through the pandemic.

Andrew Morgan	Chair	Nick Ellis	Member
Peter Walker	Treasurer	Robert Heaton	Member
Geoff Taylor	Secretary	Vanessa Joseph	Communications Officer
Phil D'Eath	Member	Lilian Ladle	Director of Field Archaeology
Alan Dedden	Programme Secretary	Bryan Popple	Member
Ian Drummond	Member	Ian Richardson	Membership Secretary

Web Link Highlights March 2021

The discovery of the WW1 'Tunnel of Death' is perhaps not the obvious choice for these pages, but it is part of the history of that war, and it also reminds us that looting is an ever present threat to the historical narrative. The loss of artefacts through sheer misfortune, natural disasters or damage during war is bad enough, but deliberate theft leaves a very sour taste, particularly when they end up in the hidden collections of those with few scruples but plenty of money. The appearance of the (then recently stolen) Goya portrait of the Duke of Wellington in Dr No's lair may have been an invention of Saltzman and Broccoli, but sadly it was not without foundation.

Like it or loathe it, Time Team brought archaeology to many who would otherwise never have given it a second thought. Watching the original programmes on Channel 4 'catch up' was also a lockdown relief. It was perhaps, 'of its time' and certainly benefited from a good mix of engaging characters. So what to make of the new episodes to be available on YouTube and by subscription on Patreon? We will have to wait and see, not least to find out how many of the original characters will feature.

Alan Dedden

March Weblinks

- **Bronze Age Spearhead Found By Detectorist On Jersey Beach** here
- **Part Of Hurst Castle Collapsed Days Before Work Due On Foundations** here
- **Titanosaur Found In Argentina Could Be Oldest Yet Discovered** here
- **Tomb Of Emperor Augustus Reopened On 1st March** here
- **'Little Foot' Fossil Examined At Oxford University X-ray Facility 'Diamond' At Harwell** here
- **Medieval Tunnel System Found By Accident** here
- **Evidence Of Mesolithic Life Found On Scottish Estate** here
- **'Pompeii Of Plants' Found In China** here
- **Medieval Women 'Put Faith In Birth Girdles' To Protect Them During Childbirth** here
- **Bronze Age Burials In Spain Suggest Women Were Rulers** here
- **Pensioner Uncovers Lost C13th Bishop's Palace In Garden** here
- **Scientists Move Closer To Solving Antikythera Mechanism** here
- **The Story Of A Benin Bronze** here
- **Monastic Ruin From 4th Century AD Found In Egypt** here
- **Three Revolutionary War Cannon Found In Savannah River** here
- **WW1 Tunnel Of Death Found In France** here
- **New Dead Sea Scroll Fragments Found In 'Cave Of Horrors'** here
- **Time Team Returns** here
- **Ancient Bronze Bull Figurine Found In Southern Greece** here
- **British Museum Identify 'Snail Man' As Medieval Meme** here
- **University Of Aberdeen To Return Benin Bronze** here
- **3,200 Year Old Temple Mural Of Spider God Identified In Peru** here
- **Six Year Old Finds Fossil In Back Garden** here
- **Two Detectorists In Their 60s Charged With Theft Of Iron Age Coins** here
- **Neolithic Salt 'Factory' Found In Yorkshire** here

- **Hi-tech Imaging Sheds New Light On Holy Sepulchre Wall Crosses** here
- **A Moving Story Of Egyptian Mummies** here

The Building as Museum Artefact

Major restoration and conservation work on the Grade II* listed building in Wimborne, which houses the Museum of East Dorset, has revealed a historic town house which dates to the 1500s. Some wonderful timber-framed partition walls and other fascinating features can now be seen again after centuries hidden behind plasterwork.

The project was led by Project Architect Claire Fear. Claire is the founder of *Thread*, an architecture practice specialising in the cultural and heritage sectors from C12 abbeys to brutalist architecture. Claire oversaw the restoration and conservation of the building, which formerly comprised the Priest's House and separate Tourist Information Centre, from inception to completion. She showed exceptional sensitivity to the listed building whilst recognising the need to change and improve access for all.

Claire is giving a *Zoom* talk about the features that were revealed during the renovation and the conservation work that was involved to preserve them as museum artefacts. The talk takes place on Tuesday 27th April at 2.00, costs £6.50 and you will have a chance to ask Claire questions about the refurbishment project. **To book your place go to this link, or phone 01202 886116.**

Vanessa Joseph

Gresham College's free History lectures in Spring/Summer 2021

Gresham College in London, founded by Sir Thomas Gresham in 1597, has been providing free public lectures on a variety of subjects for over 400 years. They have been recording them since the 1980s and live streaming them more recently, then making them available on *Zoom*. Over 2,000 can be seen through their website or on YouTube. Of course, the number of History lectures is rather less, but still covers a wide variety of subjects.

Upcoming lectures include ones on Napoleon and the Crusades, with continuing series (you can watch earlier lectures) including *England's Reformations* and the *Great Tudor and Stuart Houses*.

For information about the History lectures go to **this link**, which also has links to all their other series. Their YouTube channel is here.

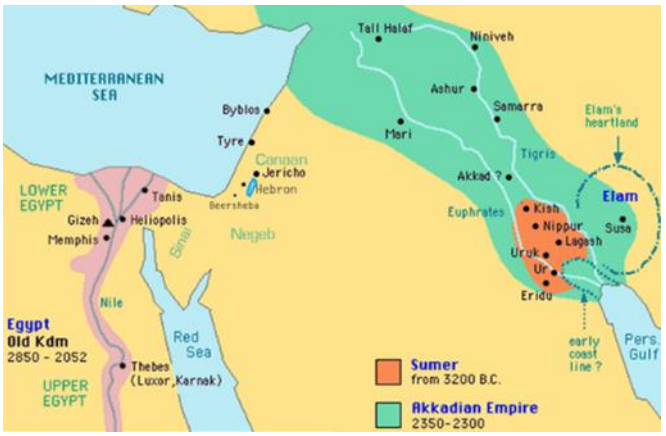
Cranborne Chase AONB's Spring Newsletter, *The Hart*, can be found **here**, including a short series of talks and links to more, plus several guided walks on Cranborne Chase.

CBA Wessex's April Newsletter is here,
with lots of links to events and interesting articles

Ancient Egypt - The Pharaoh Becomes Supreme

At the time that Ancient Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt and, slightly later, the Indus Valley were advancing their own distinctive cultures there were myriad other societies at various stages of development throughout the world, each evolving their own individual characteristics. Although Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Indus Valley may have left more material remains of their early cultures, it does not necessarily mean that these peoples were any more 'civilised', in the sense of civility, humaneness, perhaps even sophistication. All it means is that, because of these material remains, Mesopotamia and Egypt in particular have been far more closely studied.

Historically, in material development terms, certain human societies have clearly advanced more rapidly than others. Whether the same can be said from a cultural (and here I mean behavioural) point of view is another matter altogether. However, for the moment I will stick to the well-trodden paths of ancient culture and, in this article, focus on early Ancient Egypt.



There used to be some controversy as to whether Egyptian culture arose independently (or, indeed, was the first) or whether it derived from Mesopotamia. It is now generally accepted that urban culture in Egypt was, if not derived from, then certainly influenced and possibly 'kick started' by Mesopotamia. But however it started, it quickly assumed its own unique personality. It is clear that intensive agriculture was being practiced in the Nile valley by 5000 BCE. It was an ideal location – reliable annual flooding and inundation brought a constant supply of rich alluvial soils providing a highly fertile environment.

Ancient Egypt is probably the most widely studied and written about of all ancient cultures prior to Classical times, but its early period is still not that well understood. Population rapidly increased in Egypt until, in the late fourth millennium BCE, it is generally accepted that the Nile valley coalesced into two (maybe more) independent kingdoms in the Lower Nile (north) and the Upper Nile (south), the latter probably centred around the site of Hierakonpolis. Less is known about the Lower Nile kingdom(s) because any remains would have long since been buried in Nile silt. It does appear that warfare between the kingdoms was endemic, but perhaps what made these embryonic states unique at such an early stage was an apparently exalted model of kingship.

As in Mesopotamia, the kings would have ruled theocracies. However, the Egyptian kings were absolute autocrats from the very beginning, with a clear connection to the supernatural. In or around 3000 BCE (the dating varies) Narmer, the king of the Lower Nile state, unified the two kingdoms by military force creating early Dynastic Egypt, the world's first nation state. Thenceforth, the Egyptian kings have been known as Pharaohs. It is quite clear from the Narmer Palette that commemorates this unification that it was a grisly, bloodthirsty affair. Pre-Dynastic and early Dynastic Egyptian society was quite brutal.

The Narmer Palette, 64cm tall and discovered 1897-8. It is designed like the palettes used for grinding cosmetics, though a ceremonial object as it is too large for personal use. It has the pharaoh with the crown of Upper Egypt (left) and wearing Lower Egypt's crown on the back.

There is clear evidence of human sacrifice and the burial of live retainers with the king and, later, with the Pharaoh, a practice which seems to have ceased only in the Third Dynasty.

This was not looked upon simply as the coming together of two separate states, but was symbolised by the conjunction of Horus, god of Upper Egypt and Seth, god of Lower Egypt, although they always remained different entities. To what extent the king of Upper Egypt was identified with Horus, the falcon-headed god, has been the subject of much controversy, but it is clear that there was a perception of a form of supernatural relationship there, just as there would have been with Seth and the king of Lower Egypt. The land was identified with the god; in a sense god and land were inseparable. Horus and Seth are often portrayed in battle, representing the war between Lower and Upper Egypt, with Horus being the victor, so wearing the crown of both Lower and Upper Egypt.

What distinguishes Egyptian religion and society from the earliest stages are two things, its preoccupation with death (which, in reality, is a preoccupation with living because the death of the king was the greatest threat to human disorder) and the pharaohs' intense relationship with the gods. Ancient Egyptians had a fascination with death; it was not treated with the same morbidity as in Mesopotamia. There was clearly a belief in an afterlife although it is unlikely that, at this early stage, it was considered that this would have been available to all but the Pharaoh and his immediate family. The vast majority of later Old Kingdom texts refer to the Pharaoh's celestial journey and his solar immortality where he continues his earthly pleasures; very little is said about the common man.

Ptah was the original Egyptian creator god, but myth has it that he was also the first king. The inference is that all subsequent kings/pharaohs had godlike tendencies. In a sense this myth sought to illustrate the Pharaoh's dominance and perhaps divinity. The Creator also being the first king meant that royalty was, from the very beginning, a divine institution. Whether the Pharaohs actually considered themselves divine remains a big question. But the Pharaoh was regarded, and certainly regarded himself, as the incarnation of *Ma'at*. Ma'at is a difficult concept – not a god (although it morphed into a goddess much later) but more a state of being. Generally translated as the personification of truth, justice and cosmic order, Ma'at emanated from the gods. Clearly the Pharaoh had some inclination of his connection to divinity, an inclination that could grow exponentially when combined with an egotistical nature!

After Narmer, the first four dynasties from about 3000 BCE to 2575 are generally referred to as the Archaic or Early Dynastic Period. Although little is known about the history of this period, it is clear that all the hallmarks of Ancient Egyptian culture were already in place. Egyptians' fascination with death was illustrated by *mastabas* – tombs which became more elaborate as the period wore on, eventually becoming pyramids. The hawk-like god Horus, victorious in the unification of Egypt, appears to have been a principal deity. Throughout Ancient Egypt's history gods were often represented as human figures with animal heads. Although the gods were clearly thought of in human terms, this animal head representation is considered to be a throwback to Pre-Dynastic times when the gods were associated with various animals.

A *mastaba*, probably of the Second Dynasty (2890-2686 BCE). Originally single storey buildings of mud brick, with the burial chamber(s) in the ground below, this one shows the beginning of elaboration with a second storey added.

As in Mesopotamia, the gods, although immortal (in the main), had as many failings as the people; there was certainly no view here of infallibility. They were temperamental and fickle, and were as capable of cruelty and injustice as they were kindness and benevolence. The practice of worship was more a form of appeasement than supplication.

And this is best illustrated in the Pharaoh: with absolute power and a supernatural connection he was successful in convincing his people that he, and he alone, was the chosen one of the gods and could intercede with the gods on behalf of the people. As the death of the Pharaoh was a threat to order and stability, it was necessary to ensure that the Pharaoh never died! How this view arose is unclear, but in all probability it was a view increasingly put forward by the Pharaoh and his entourage in an attempt to increase the Pharaohs' own power and standing. What appears to have evolved is an increasingly overbearing predilection to exercising absolute power, maintained by the Pharaoh's communion with the gods and his form of immortality.

This predilection grew throughout the Early Dynastic Period, to the extent that Third Dynasty Pharaoh Djoser (2650-2620 BCE) constructed the famous Step Pyramid at Saqqara. The Fourth Dynasty saw the start of Egypt's Old Kingdom, and its first Pharaoh, Sneferu (2575-2545 BCE), took pyramid building to the next level. He initially constructed the Meidum Pyramid, of which only the inner core now remains, then then went on to build the 'Bent Pyramid'. That wasn't used because it was built on shaky foundations, so he built the Red Pyramid to become his final resting place.

By this stage the art of pyramid building had been perfected! Sneferu's successor, Khufu (2545-2525 BCE) built the Great Pyramid at Giza. His son, Khafra *c*.2500 (nobody is quite sure of the exact dates), built the second pyramid at Giza together (it is thought) with the Sphinx. The third and smaller pyramid was built by Khafra's son, Menkaure and the smallest pyramids were for their wives (below). After this no more monumental pyramids were constructed, though much smaller ones continued. The construction of these gigantic pyramids had exhausted the country economically and spiritually.

So what was going on here? The Egyptians believed that the soul comprised at least three parts, the *Ka*, *Ba* and *Akh*. The Ka was the life force, the Ba enabled a person after death to travel between the world of the living and the dead, and the Akh was the spirit that survived death and was able to mingle with the gods. Mummification became important in Egypt so that the Ba could recognise its body and return to it after death. In the Old Kingdom it was believed that only the Pharaoh, and perhaps members of his family, would have possessed both Ba and Akh, and thus enjoy an after-life with the gods together with the ability to re-visit the living. In all probability it was thought that the majority of folk would not have enjoyed any form of afterlife, other than some form of continuation in a nondescript nether-world.

So why build pyramids? Despite the huge imprint on the world heritage left by the pyramids, very little is actually known about why they were built, though it is clear that there was a very substantial element here of self-aggrandisement on the part of the pharaoh. There are no hieroglyphic inscriptions in any of the pyramids; hieroglyphic inscriptions in tombs only started to proliferate in the Fifth Dynasty. The Pyramids were

robbed of their contents way back in antiquity, so there is now very little in or about them or the Sphinx, to reveal their secrets. Views have been put that they were built by a willing populous pleased to accommodate their divine king. A more pragmatic view is that they were built by forced labour organised by an autocratic hierarchy bent on imposing their will, a view I would share. There are very few instances in history where massive constructions have been undertaken by a happy workforce through a love of authority! And that possibly is the answer.

The Pharaoh became convinced of his own importance in the eyes of the gods and he was also convinced of his importance in the eyes of the populace, so had to convince the populace that he needed to be preserved in the afterlife to continue to commune with the gods on behalf of the people. To achieve this end he needed the biggest tomb to befit a living representation of the gods.

The pyramids (and in all probability the convictions that went with them) were an aberration in history not a trend; their construction could not be continued both because it had exhausted the state economically and also because to do so would have engendered general popular revolt, if this was not already happening! Pharaohs' immortality continued to be preserved, but by more humble means. As the Old Kingdom wore on it is clear that the immortality of the Pharaoh began to be shared with lesser individuals. Mummification became more widespread, presumably with a corresponding spreading of wealth beyond the immediate family of the Pharaoh. The Ancient Egyptian cultural experience was beginning to be shared by a larger proportion of the population.

Next time back to Mesopotamia and the world's first empires, together with a look at the enigmatic Indus Valley Civilisation.

Neil Meldrum

Plans to improve Dorset's Heritage Environment Record

Claire Pinder, Senior Archaeologist at Dorset Council, has sent us the ***Dorset HER Forward Plan 2021-2025*** which can be found **HERE**

The Dorset Historic Environment Record covers historic buildings and archaeological finds and features in the county, ranging from isolated finds of coins or fragments of pottery to massive earthwork features covering many hectares – from the earliest prehistoric periods to industrial sites and World War 2 defences. Wrecks and underwater sites are included, as well as sites with special designations such as scheduled monuments and listed buildings.

The plan is quite a long and ambitious document that looks comprehensively at how the HER can be improved, both in continuing existing initiatives and starting new ones. You should find it easier to read than the length might suggest, as many pages are photographs of HER sites.

Claire has asked that you complete a short online survey to comment on the plans. It can be found HERE, should take around 10 minutes and will help to refine proposals on this record, which is vital for the protection and enhancement of Dorset's historic heritage.

Rural Poverty in Dorset

You may recall Alan Dedden's article in the last newsletter about Dorset being the poorest county in 19th century England. Gill Vickery recommends Barbara Kerr's *Bound to the Soil, a social history of Dorset 1750-1918* for anyone interested in following this up. It follows particular families in different areas to explain social change in rural areas, and Gill says it's very readable. Dorset Libraries hold several copies available for click and collect, or used copies are available, e.g. on Abe Books and eBay (though expect to pay around £30).

REMEMBERING THE ROMANS XI

Of all the over 40,000 epitaphs we looked at in total, and particularly the almost 13,000 that gave ages, only the one here gave both a date of birth and a date of death, though it didn't give a year (I've spaced it differently to the original to make it easier to follow).

D.M. BLASTIONE
VIX AN VI MENSIB VIIII
DIEB XIIII HORA I
NATUS V K SEPTEMBRES
HORA DIEI VI DIE LUNAE
DEFUNCTUS III IDUS IUNIAS
HOR PRIM DIEI DIE SATURN
ITEM MATRI EIUS QUAE VIXIT
ANNIS XX DIEBUS XXX HORIS X
RELIQVIT EUM MENS XII D XX
BLASTUS PATER FILIO PIISSIMO FECIT

To the spirit of the departed Blastione (? an unusual name) who lived 6 years, 9 months, 14 days (and 1 hour). From last 4 lines: also to his mother, who lived 20 years, 30 days and 10 hours; his father, Blastus set this up to his most dutiful son. 'Reliquit eum' is unclear but may mean that the dedication was made 12 months and 20 days after the death, perhaps marking the anniversary.
CIL 6.13602 Rome

We can see that Blastus' wife gets rather less attention than his son. Otherwise, this needs a good deal of information about Roman dating to fully understand, though the hours are, at least, fairly straightforward. Blastione was born at the 6th hour of the day and passed away at the first hour, so the single hour stated in the length of life clearly relates to the time of day rather than the time lived.

There were just 3 named days in the Roman month, Kalends (*Kalendae*), Nones (*Nonae*) and Ides (*Idus*). The Kalends was always the 1st of the month, Nones was the 5th and Ides the 13th in so-called 'hollow months', ones that didn't have 31 days in the early Roman calendar. In the 'full months' of March, May, July and October the Nones was the 7th and the Ides the 15th. Hence the famous Shakespearian prophecy about Julius Caesar, "Beware the Ides of March", was a warning about the 15th of March.

The Romans then stated dates as a number of days before one of these named days. The day before was called *pridie*, so *pridie Kalendis Ianuarius*, the day before the 1st January, is actually the last day of the previous year. Also, they didn't count the days before as we would but included the day itself, so *ante diem III*, 3 days before, was the day before *pridie* that we would count as 2 days before. It seems confusing but I imagine the Romans did this without even thinking about it, just as those working out change in our pre-decimal currency did, when younger people find it difficult to comprehend.

I thought that the use of Roman numerals IIII, rather than IV, might provide a rough clue to the year, and hence to which calendar was in use. However, although this change came quite early in the Republican period, IIII continued to be used in many cases. As in the epitaph in article VI, where it is IIII for years, months and for days, it could simply have been done that way for its visual effect and balance. That is why IIII is still seen today on some modern clocks and watches.

Looking at the Julian calendar, introduced by Julius Caesar from 45 BC, we can easily understand the months since they are essentially our own. Originally, though, July was *Quintilis* (the 5th month) and August was *Sextilis*, left over from a much earlier calendar that apparently had no January or February. July was renamed to commemorate Julius Caesar in 44BC and August by Augustus in 8 BC. So, on the Julian calendar, Blastione was born on *V K Septembres*, the 5th day before the Kalends of September, i.e. 27th August. He died on *III Idus Iuanias*, the 3rd day before the Ides of June, i.e. 11th June.

There seems to be a good deal of debate as to exactly how the earlier Republican calendars worked, and when and how changes were made. In the early days of Rome there were 10 months with 'intercalary' (i.e. 'between' the calendar) days or months added to make up the year, with much controlled by the

priesthood. It's not even completely clear when January and February were introduced, though it seems to be around 600 BC, or whether they were treated as the beginning or end of the year, though the fact that the god Janus faced both ways rather suggests January was the start of a new year (here in a coin of 225-214 BC). All the same, our September to December are still named as the 7th to 10th months.

Intercalary periods still seem to have applied from time to time in the later Republic. However, the disarray and civil wars during the Late Republic also meant that they were often neglected by the priests. The calendar became increasingly out of synchronisation with the seasons, so much so that 46 BC had to have 3 months added before the new calendar was introduced. On the 'normal' Republican calendar Blastione would have been born on the 25th of *Sextilis*, which then had 29 days. There can't have been an intercalary month or the period to 11th June would have been 10 months or more, rather than the 9 on the epitaph. We would think of the stated 9 months as taking us up to 25th May so, since May had 31 days as now, to 11th June is 9 months and 17 days.

If we look at the Julian calendar, we would take the period in the epitaph as 9 months and 15 days. At a stretch we could believe the Romans would count this as 9 months and 14 days using similar logic as that in counting the number of days before the Kalends, Nones or Ides.

Perhaps the days of the week help? Lunae is Monday and Saturn is Saturday – born on a Monday and died on a Saturday (incidentally exactly the fate of Solomon Grundy in the famous poem, e.g. see www.wordsforlife.org.uk/solomon-grundy). The other Roman days of the week were Solis – Sunday, Martis – Tuesday, Mercuri – Wednesday, Jovis – Thursday and Veneris – Friday, named after Graeco-Roman deities. We've changed Tuesday to Friday for Norse deities, but more of the Roman names have passed into Romance languages, like the Spanish days of the week here.

In any case, we can then consider in what year 27th August falls on a Monday and 11th June of the following year is a Saturday. Luckily there are a number of online calculators for this, like the following, which clearly allows for dates BC: https://keisan.casio.com/exec/system/1247132711. There doesn't seem to be a reverse calculator to ask which years the date and day match, and the accuracy before 45 BC is uncertain. There are 55 years from 45 BC to AD 400 where the 27th August is a Monday, but none have the following 11th June as Saturday. In fact, I could have worked this out if I'd thought about it first: the period is 288 days on the Julian calendar, or 41 weeks and 1 day, so the 11th June must be a Tuesday (or Wednesday if in a Leap Year). The standard Republican calendar would have given 40 weeks and 1 day, so that doesn't work either.

So, if anyone has followed it this far, despite all the seeming accuracy, and the expense of a large stone and of cutting a great deal of lettering, this epitaph remains inaccurate. It does suggest that some people had the ability to calculate periods of years if they wanted, even if slightly incorrectly. It also implies that it was difficult to keep a record of days and dates, or remember them, even over a fairly short time.

My apologies for the length of this article, but I wanted to cover all of it in one go so that there was no need to refer back to previous newsletters. I hope some of you have read this far, and promise that the next article will be a much shorter summary. After that I'll do one with what I thought were interesting epitaphs, even if they don't relate to issues with ages.

Geoff Taylor

View from Above No 36:
Cley Hill

Photo by Sue Newman and Jo Crane

Once part of the Longleat estate, this hill just west of Warminster was given to the National Trust by the 6th Marquess of Bath in 1954. There is a small car park nearby, and the hill gives extensive views of West Wiltshire and Somerset and uninterrupted views of the sky from its 244m (801 feet) summit, providing a "locally famous UFO hotspot". Of course, the rather beautiful crop circle has nothing to do with aliens, but would have caused real problems for the farmer, including loss of part of the crop.

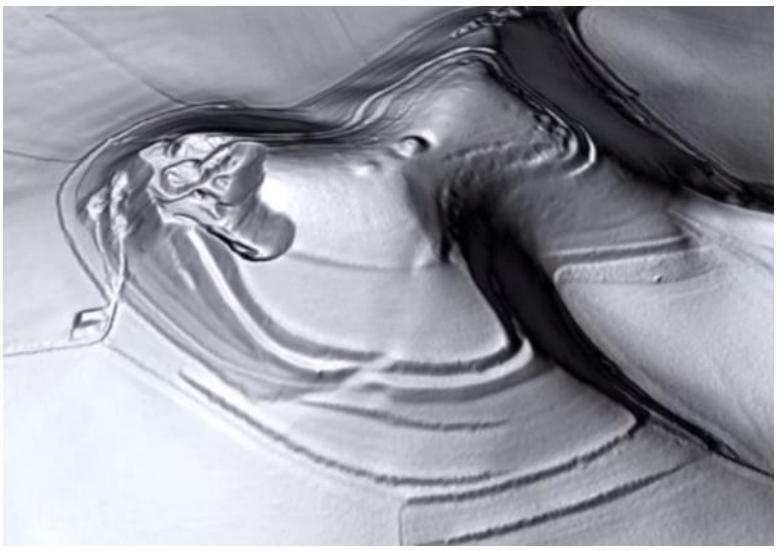
This botanically rich chalk grassland is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest, with some plants and animals that have restricted distributions. In particular, they mention two plants – early gentian *Gentianella anglica* and bastard-toadflax *Thesium humifusum*, as well as uncommon mosses and the nationally scarce adonis blue butterfly. In total, 20 species of butterfly have been recorded.

The scheduled univallate Iron Age hillfort contains two Bronze Age (or possibly late Neolithic) bowl barrows near the summit, though they're not very obvious on the photograph. In fact, many of the features described here are clearer on the LiDAR plot below. The larger barrow, at the summit, is 4m high and 28m in diameter, with the ditch beyond that. The smaller barrow, nearer to us on the photograph, is still 22m in diameter. Both were partially excavated by Sir Richard Colt Hoare and William Cunnington in the early 19th century, the larger producing traces of wheat and the smaller an interment of burnt bone. The excavations are recorded in Colt Hoare's *The Ancient History of Wiltshire* from 1812 (volume 1, p.51).

According to Historic England, the hillfort itself is protected by "a steep scarp up to 7m high, surrounded by a flat berm up to 4m wide, enclosing an area of 7ha on the top of the hill. To the east (right on the photograph) and north east traces of an outer bank up to 3m high survive at the edge of the berm." These defences are limited or non-existent in the natural bowl to the east, where the steepness of the slope meant they weren't needed. Also, the defences have been mostly destroyed to the south west (left) by a post-medieval quarry, perhaps the site of the original entrance. House platforms and pits are, apparently, particularly evident to the south east (i.e. towards the bottom on the photograph)

There is a quite slight bank and ditch running right from the quarry to the natural bowl, interpreted as a cross-dyke on the Historic England site. However, Pastscape reports the results of an RCHME survey in 1993 that interpreted this as a post-medieval boundary marker.

To the south and west, below the quarry, are the remains of "two flights of medieval strip lynchets". These terraces, which allowed easier cultivation on the slope, have scarps up to 4m high with the flatter 'treads' between them about 7m across.



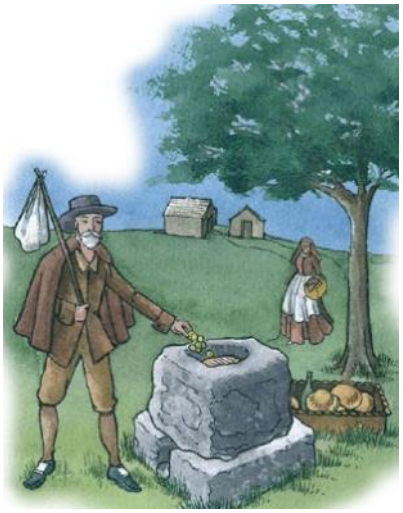
This somewhat over-smoothed LiDAR image makes many features, like the quarrying at the left, rather clearer.

Geoff Taylor/ Jo Crane

Isolation and disinfectant – a story which spans the centuries

When 'zooming' with a schoolfriend in Scotland, we discussed cash vs. contactless cards and whether loose change has been necessary during the pandemic. I mentioned that I had just walked up the lane to buy eggs. There is an honesty box system on the farm and we now throw our coins into a container full of disinfectant. That reminded Pat about her friend Sue who has a plague stone at her farmhouse in the Scottish borders.

Plague raged for two-and-a-half centuries, from 1348 to 1679, ravaging even the remotest corners of the land. Like today, people, had to make a living, trade or find food. Plague stones are relics of those times.



Plague stones are usually stone boulders with hollowed out depressions, which were filled with vinegar as a disinfectant and placed at or near parish boundaries. Sometimes they were formed out of the bases of crosses. Goods or food were left by the stone and the hope was that the community would drop their coins into the vinegar, buying goods without fear of contagion and, hopefully, avoiding spreading the deadly disease further.

Sue's stone

Sue's farm is about 4½ miles from Tweedsmuir village. The farmstead includes numerous prehistoric settlements and there is evidence of a medieval road. The site of Hawkshaw castle, the ancestral home of the Porteous clan is on the farm. There are scattered houses along the valley, the earliest from the 1630s.

Sue's plague stone is free standing and relatively easy to move. She isn't sure if it belongs to the farm or whether it was brought there at some point in the past. It's dimensions are about 60 x 30 x 35 cm high,

and the hole is cone-shaped – about 20 cm maximum width and about 20 cm deep.

The farm is a few miles from the Crook Inn, in Tweedsmuir. Many claim this is the oldest licensed coaching inn in Scotland, so it could be that the route of the road used to be much closer to the farmstead. The Tweedsmuir Kirk records state that the date of 1645 was the worst outbreak of the plague that visited the Upper Tweed, described by John Buchan in his classic novel *Witch Wood*. It is possible that the occupants of the farm sold their goods at the roadside, at a time when all regular markets were suspended and people were struggling to find enough food to eat.
Who would have thought a walk up the village to buy eggs would have led me to research an artefact in the Scottish borders which is so pertinent to these times of COVID-19? I doubt that our plastic containers with disinfectant will have such longevity.

I'm very grateful to Sue for sharing the information about her plague stone and the area with us. She and her partner rear hardy primitive Shetland sheep on the mountains, which thrive in the harsh environment and produce quality fleeces ideal for warm and durable wool. If you want to know more about Sue, the farm, the sheep and the wool go to the website here.

Vanessa Joseph

EDAS 2021 PROGRAMME

Subject to coronavirus restrictions lectures will one day be from 7:30 – 9:30 pm at St Catherine's Church Hall, Lewens Lane, Wimborne, BH21 1LE. Meanwhile, at 7:30 on a device near you.

Wed 14th April	Zoom Lecture	**Julian Richards**	Shaftesbury - Alfred's Town, Alfred's Abbey
Wed 12th May	Zoom Lecture	**Mike Allen**	The Prehistoric Chalkland Landscape of Stonehenge, Avebury and Dorchester - tearing up the textbooks and starting again
EVENTS TO BE RESCHEDULED			
tbd	Tour	**Devizes Museum**	
tbd	Walk	**Cranborne Chase**	
tbd	Day trip	**London Museums trip**	

DISTRICT DIARY

Your information is very welcome, especially now when this section is completely empty
ALL EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS THEN IN FORCE
Local societies may have events, but they're not generally advertised beyond members, but many thanks to AVAS for the invitations to join their Zoom lectures