East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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www.dorset-archaeology.org.uk
mail@dorset-archaeology.org.uk
https://www.facebook.com/dorset.archaeology

Edited by Geoff Taylor, email: geoffnsue@hotmail.co.uk, Tel: 01202 840166
224 Leigh Road, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 2BZ

NEWSLETTER – Midsummer 2021

Editor's Notes

Welcome to the Midsummer Newsletter on yet another sweltering day as I write, though I guess we can't complain compared with the recent temperatures in western North America or the terrible floods in Europe and China. But, since we're British we will complain about the heat, no doubt to be followed soon by complaints about some other aspect of our weather.

I'm always grateful to the contributors who help to make our newsletter so varied and (I hope) interesting, and would be even more grateful to have some new ones.

Andrew starts us off with a piece on our **New Honorary Members**. It's hard to add to the superlatives about these people, so I'll just let you read it for yourself.

Many thanks to Vanessa for her summary of Mike Allen's lecture in May: **The prehistoric chalkland landscape of Stonehenge, Avebury and Dorchester**…. Thank you also for her 'picture diary' (further down) of the subsequent EDAS visit to Mike's lab and his guided walk around the Stonehenge landscape: **EDAS members taste freedom**, our first group get-together for some time.

I remain very grateful to Neil Meldrum for his series of articles on human spiritual evolution, which have also served to remind me about some of the ancient civilisations covered. This month sees publication of the 9th in the series, **The Emergence of Dominant Gods**, taking us through parts of the Middle East up to about 3,500 years ago.

Alan has produced another long list of **Weblinks** for you to follow up, as well as a slightly grumpy (for good reason) **Weblink Highlights**.

Thank you also to Janet Bartlet, who lives in Cerne Abbas, for much of the information and the excavation drawing in **Dating the Giant at Cerne Abbas**, and to Vanessa for adding to the details. I trust that this article will serve as a reminder of the dating announcement a couple of months back, as well as rounding out the story.

We do, of course, have a planned programme of lectures for the coming 'season', described in the last newsletter and summarised in the **EDAS Programme** at the end. It assumes that, other than those shown as being on Zoom, lectures are back at St. Catherine's hall. We hope that these can go ahead, and it may be that work on new technology allows the more flexible approach described previously. **District Diary** returns though, as yet, is rather empty!

Geoff Taylor

Reply to me, please (email above or just hit 'reply'); any contributions welcome.

New Honorary Members

It is with great pleasure and a sense of pride for the Society to announce that Lilian Ladle and Martin Green have accepted our invitation to become Honorary Members of EDAS.

They are two of the most accomplished, independent archaeologists working in the country today. For decades they have dedicated themselves to archaeological investigations in a quest to better understand the lives of our ancestors. Both are keen to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with the wider community and actively help the next generation to follow in their footsteps. They work to the highest professional standards and make redundant the distinction between amateur and professional, apart from being much cheaper.

Martin has been involved with EDAS from its inception, nearly 40 years ago, when he provided opportunities for field work on his land and acted as archaeological consultant and mentor; he has remained involved with the society ever since. Later this summer two EDAS walks will start from his farm and end with a visit to his incredible archaeological museum. His contribution to archaeology was recognised in 2006 when he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Reading. During the proceedings Prof Richard Bradley suggested that Martin had probably devised more projects, discovered more monuments and conducted more excavations than most people working in any university. The list is much longer now, and he regularly supports important archaeological projects on prehistoric sites across the country.

In more recent times Lilian has taken the archaeological work of the society to a new level. Through her energy, competence and sheer determination, she has managed two exceptional archaeological projects on behalf of EDAS. First, the multi-phase Worth Matravers Excavation which she directed between 2008-2011, followed by writing the accompanying monograph that was published in 2019. This was followed closely by the Druce Farm Roman Villa Excavation 2011-2018, which attracted a great deal of academic interest, not least from Prof Sir Barry Cunliffe, who made several important contributions. Lilian is taking full advantage of the Covid lockdown, enabling her to focus on the mammoth challenge as author of the monograph which will be presented for publication later this year. In 2008 she was awarded an MBE for services to archaeology for her exceptional work in directing the multi-phase Bestwall Quarry excavation, which she directed over 13 years.

Both are inspirational in their archaeological endeavours, but they are also really nice, compassionate people with a sense of fun (plus Martin enjoys jazz and cricket, a winning combination). They join a short and impressive list of honorary members that comprises: Tim Schadla-Hall, Prof Richard Bradley and Jude James. The late Della Day and John Day were also proud recipients in recognition of their incomparable contribution to the society.

Andrew Morgan

And here are just a few images from the archives:

Old friends reminisce

The three ……..

Lilian is almost lost for words……!

Can't beat a bit of practical archaeology

Helping preparations for our Open Day

Speaks for itself

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The prehistoric chalkland landscape of Stonehenge, Avebury and Dorchester – tearing up the textbooks and starting again
ZOOM lecture by Dr Mike Allen, MCIfa, FLS, FSA

Stonehenge and Avebury are the two most iconic prehistoric landscapes in Wessex, if not in the UK. These monument-strewn landscapes have been studied by archaeologists and palaeo-environmental archaeologists since the early 1970s, with further work undertaken in the Stonehenge area in the 1990s and at Avebury in the early 2000s. The understanding of these landscapes has been that the peoples of the time cleared vast swathes of woodland to create spaces to build their monuments. This view of the land-use history provided the foundation for understanding the activities, economies and actions of the communities from the Mesolithic to the Roman period and beyond. Mike Allen, one of the country's leading environmental- and geo-archaeologists, says the old textbooks, including some of his own, have actually been a hindrance as new data now allows the story to be re-written.

Our previous view argued for a Europe-wide post-glacial tundra landscape that developed, as climate warmed, to a birch, juniper and pine-dominated woodland by the early Mesolithic around 10,000 BC. As the climate warmed further over the Mesolithic, this developed to mixed oak and hazel-dominated woodland, then progressively cleared. Pollen is the main way of understanding the history of past vegetation, but it doesn't survive well on chalk-dominated landscapes, so that evidence for the chalklands was lacking.

Pioneering work by John Evans in the 1970s used land snails to examine the character of past vegetation, tending to confirm this view. Now new research, combined with the re-examination of John Evans' classic sequences at Avebury itself, and in its landscape, has enabled a re-evaluation, revision and

reinterpretation of those landscapes in terms of their vegetation and land-use histories. Mike Allen, also a conchologist, has used the humble snail to help rewrite these landscapes. It is possible that many centres of prehistoric activity were not dense areas of ancient woodland, as previously thought, but areas of an open nature. Such sites were chosen by nature for human activity, rather than cleared by man. This new reinterpretation allows revision of not just the land-use history, but of prehistoric community engagement and interpretation in that landscape.

Mike in action. Extensive auger records underpin the results and conclusions.

Recent work undertaken within the framework of two major AHRC research projects, *Between the Monuments* and the current *Living with Monuments* project, has critically examined interpretations and attempted a new high-resolution map of land-use associated with the development of the prehistoric monumental landscape.

This work has relied on a combination of aspects of geoarchaeology, soil micromorphology and snail analyses conducted by Charly French and Mike Allen.

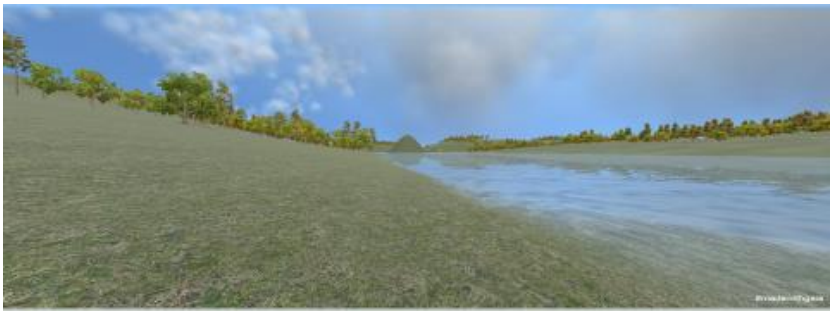
The results to date have been dramatic, starting to create a new prehistory for the Avebury area. The basis of the previous work seems to have been flawed, as it was predicated on thick woodland soils eroded by clearance and tillage. That would have led to the soil thinning and the ground reverting to thin chalkland. The dry valleys would have been choked with colluvium (deposited at the base of a slope) and the river valleys infilled with alluvium (deposited by water). Neither have been found in these projects.

The results indicate that the landscape was much more of a mosaic of vegetation and land-use – as one might expect – and not a uniform stage upon which people cleared areas. There seems to have been a lack of full post-glacial woodland cover over much the Avebury landscape – not a treeless landscape, but one of varying and open woodland. The interpretation that Windmill Hill was cleared of trees for the causewayed enclosure still, potentially, remains intact but interpretation of much of the rest of the landscape may well need revision.

As Mike has said: ***"Avebury … was an open but not treeless area, with rich biodiversity … a very stable landscape, inhabited by herds of animals, browsing, grazing and drinking. The Stone Avenue valley in Avebury may have contained a series of stepped pools of water making this an unusual and special landscape.***
It was an inviting place for human occupation; a landscape differing from the main Wessex Downlands; and only paralleled at …. Stonehenge, Cranborne Chase and Dorchester - the main prehistoric centres in Wessex."

To demonstrate the likely early landscape, computer-generated visualisation images have been created by Stuart Eve. The early drafts below show the Winterbourne valley at Butlers Field west of Avebury.

What, is now needed is to complete the current analyses, and ideally to include a combination of some long-stratified sediment sequence – such as those that reside in the ditches of the Neolithic monuments in the landscape, as well as an examination of the sealed Neolithic soils buried beneath those monuments. We'll look forward to hearing more when that is done.



Vanessa Joseph

The Emergence of Dominant Gods

My intention in this article is to introduce the spiritual change resulting from "henotheism", but that's hardly a well-known term; the editor won't mind me saying that he had to look it up, so the advice was not to use the word in the title. It's a term derived from Greek to mean devotion to a single primary god while accepting the existence or possible existence of other deities. Max Müller brought it into wider use in the 19th century, but said that it actually means monotheism in principle and polytheism in fact.

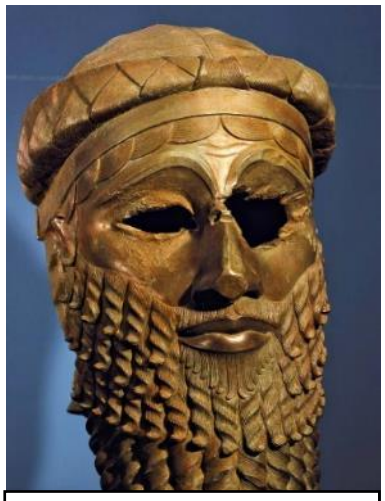
In the Babylonian story of the flood (preceding the Biblical version by over a thousand years), Atrahasis, the hero (in even earlier Sumerian sources he is referred to as Utnapishtim or Zisudra) was a pious king of Uruk. He heard from the Sumerian god Enki that all the gods were about to destroy Humankind and all living things by sending a great flood. Evidently, the supreme god Enlil had decided to rid the Earth of humanity because they made too much noise and the gods could not sleep, subsequently interpreted as Humankind's ungrateful and recalcitrant behaviour towards the gods. Enki advised Atrahasis to construct an enormous boat for his family and to take as many animals as he could save. On the seventh day of the flood Atrahasis's craft rested on a mountain top. Atrahasis sent out a dove and a swallow but neither returned. A little later he sent a crow and this time the bird did not return – it had found land.

In the earlier Sumerian versions of the story, Upnapishtim made sacrifice to the gods in gratitude and was rewarded by being transported to a distant land where he was granted immortality. However, Atrahasis was not given the same privilege in the Babylonian version, which is dated to the 16th century BCE. But it does appear that in all these various stories of the flood, as in the later Biblical account, the chief cause for the flood lay in the sins of Humankind, the perceived general decrepitude of the world and the gods' disgust at their own creation!

The second millennium BCE appears to have been a period of profound change in the outlook of Humankind in the Middle East. There slowly grew the realisation that the divine and the human realms were separate, clearly illustrated by the story of the flood. Humankind had to start taking responsibility

for its own actions. Complete reliance on 'Big Gods' was not necessarily the answer, though 'Big Men' increasingly took the stage. Society was still dominated by Big Gods, but there was a growing perception that they alone could not provide the salvation that humanity desperately sought.

And the character of the Big Gods was changing. There was a clear trend towards one god becoming dominant, a god that required appeasement but also support from Humankind. At this stage we are not talking about a universal god, simply one god becoming dominant in his own society - as above, a process known as Henotheism.



Sargon of Akkad. Bronze head from Nineveh now in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad.

In the latter part of the third millennium BCE, Semitic Akkadians arrived in Lower Mesopotamia, replacing the Sumerians as the dominant group. They didn't destroy Sumerian culture, rather adopted and adapted it. Sargon (*c.*2300-2275 BCE) was the founder of the first true Mesopotamian empire centred in a new capital, Akkad, and the first of the 'Big Men' (The location of Akkad is unknown but it was probably well to the north of Babylon. Before cuneiform was deciphered the city was only known from a single reference in Genesis.). If Sargon's empire was the greatest yet, that created by his grandson, Narim-Sin (2254-2218), was even greater. But on Narim-Sin's death the whole structure rapidly fell apart. It was still too early; sufficient administrative procedures and organisation hadn't then been devised to maintain the structure of an empire. It was quickly overrun by the barbarian Gutians who, unlike the Akkadians, appear to have been wreckers rather than preservers of culture. This process of empire followed by barbarian onslaughts characterised the whole of Mesopotamian history throughout the second millennium BCE.

However, these early empires did mark a fundamental shift in outlook. A new conception of the meaning of the universe came about and people, or perhaps more accurately kings, took centre-stage. Battles were now fought in the name and for the aggrandisement of the king, not, as in earlier Sumerian times, in the name of the god of a particular city. Now it was the king who was in control, aided by his god.

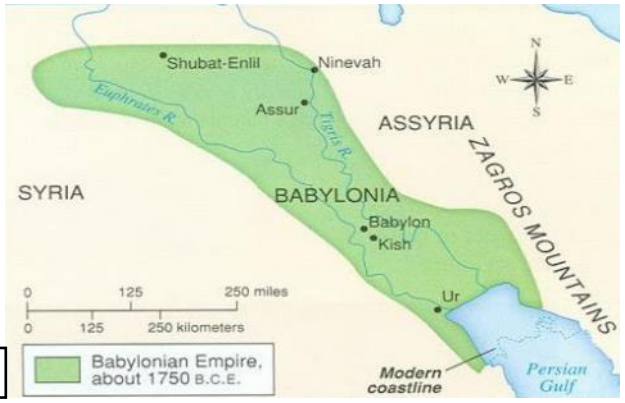
When the mists of time clear, some 100 years or so later, the Sumerians are back in charge of Lower Mesopotamia. A character by the name of Utu-Hegal appears to have reinstated a short-lived Sumerian empire, now known as the Third Dynasty of Ur (though it appears that the Second Dynasty may not have existed). The empire was consolidated by Ur-Nammu, but its greatest king was his son Shulgi (2030-1982 BCE). Again this empire collapsed very shortly after Shulgi's death, this time being overrun by the Amorites, a Semitic people from the Levant. It was during this period that the famous ziggurats were constructed, the most notable being the Ziggurat of Ur, a huge structure right in the centre of the city which apparently supported the temple to the moon goddess Nanna, the patron deity of Ur.

The partially reconstructed Ziggurat of Ur, west of modern Basrah in Iraq

Another rather obscure period followed until the Amorites organised themselves into the first Babylonian Empire under Hammurabi (1792-1750) and his son Samsuiluna (1749-1712 BCE), a little larger than Sargon's empire. It was long thought that Hammurabi's was the first written legal code, though earlier codes have now been discovered, in particular the code of Ur Nammu from around 3 centuries earlier. But Hammurabi's code seems to have been the most comprehensive, albeit also the harshest: "If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out. If he breaks another man's bone, his bone shall be broken", and so it goes on.

Hammurabi (probably). Diorite sculpture in the Louvre.

Some 280 judgements have come to light concerning family, slavery, commercial dealings, agriculture and administration. What this code illustrates is the disappearance of the ancient Sumerian communal ideal, replaced by the individualism and private enterprise so characteristic of Babylonian society.



The Babylonian epic poem, the Enuma Elish, from around the 17th century BCE, is about the origins of the universe and was written in order to exalt the god Marduk above all others as the dominant god. In this myth the gods are threatened with attack by monsters unleashed by the evil goddess Tiamat, the personification of chaos. Marduk is proclaimed supreme god by the other gods in order to do battle with Tiamat, shown below in a bas relief now in the British Museum. He is victorious, and in killing Tiamat he cut her corpse in two, one half becoming the sky, the other half the earth. Marduk then creates humans from the blood of Qingu, the evil consort of Tiamat, for the specific purpose of serving the gods.

This story illustrates the notoriously pessimistic nature of Babylonian thought. The Earth and the Sky are formed from the remains of the evil Tiamat. Humankind is made from a demonic substance, her consort Qingu, so that Humankind is already condemned by its own origins. This myth appears to be grappling toward some kind of conception of 'Original Sin'. The difference, however, between this version and the Biblical version is that Humankind has not lost its innocence, it never had it in the first place!

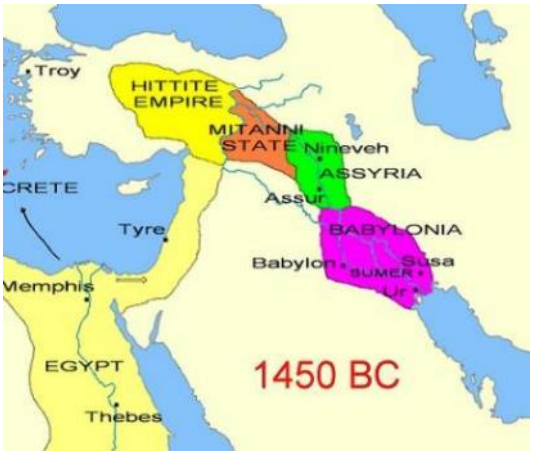
The other great chronicle of the early Babylonian period is the Epic of Gilgamesh, part of which is on this

cuneiform tablet from the British Museum. In an age when life after death was either not recognised or was, at best, a gloomy existence in an underworld (apart, perhaps, for a small section of the ruling élite), the prospect of immortality was to be relished. Gilgamesh, a legendary king, is overcome with grief at the death of his friend, Enkidu. He decides to seek out the secret of immortality by contacting the immortal Upnapishtim (who we met earlier). After many vicissitudes and adventures he finally reaches Upnapishtim, who reluctantly reveals the secret of immortality – a magical plant found at the bottom of the sea. Gilgamesh immediately plunges into the sea and recovers the plant, but it is stolen by a snake. In despair he invokes the spirit of Enkidu, who persuades him of the inevitability of death and the gloomy netherworld. The gods are immortal and they guard the secret of immortality carefully from Humankind; Humankind has no right to everlasting life. Again, the emphasis of the story is that Humanity's sole purpose is to serve the gods, not to be with them.

By 1500 BCE the creative genius of Mesopotamia, now represented by the Babylonians, had dissipated but their philosophical pessimism endured. Mesopotamian/Babylonian culture continued for another

1500 or so years, permeating all later cultures in the Middle East. The ideas, beliefs, and practical techniques of Mesopotamian and Babylonian origin continued to circulate and enhanced the whole of the region. They were the originators of so much both materially and culturally but, as is so often the case with originators, their genius became submerged and stultified. Still, the pessimism endured, possibly as a consequence of the continual natural catastrophes and barbarian invasions suffered by the Mesopotamian peoples; it was felt that that was the way the gods managed the universe!

The god Marduk was unable to defend Babylon from the onslaught of yet another group of barbarians, the Kassites, who dominated Babylonia from the 16th century BCE for about 500 years. They kept Babylonian culture alive but did little to build on it. Meanwhile others were making an impact: the Assyrians to the north (although we are still a long way off the notorious Assyrian Empire of the 7th & 8th centuries BCE), the Hittites carving out an empire in Anatolia and attacking Babylonia, and a resurgent New Kingdom Egypt was making its presence felt. The kingdom of Mitanni became a dominant player for a short period, so that from about 1500-1200 BCE there were 5 major players in the region. None were able to establish suzerainty over the whole region but each culture made its own contributions, both materially and philosophically, fortunately tempering the pessimism of the Babylonians.

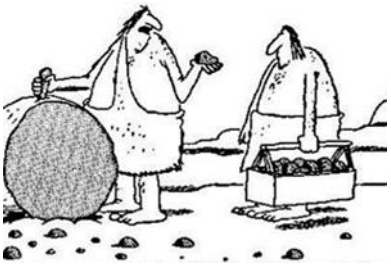


As more authority became vested in single individuals on earth, the kings, so the same in the heavens. The higher a deity climbs the more it has to take on the characteristics of all of the lower gods, though this henotheism rarely evolves into monotheism. Each of the states had their own principal deity: Egypt – Amun-Re, Assyria – Ashur, Babylonia – Marduk, the Hittites – Teshub, and Mittani – Kushukh (possibly the same entity as Teshub). However, there doesn't appear to have been any attempt to impose one god over another, so why did the concept of monotheism fail to take root in the religious imagination until more recently? Perhaps the answer has to do with the way in which the idea of only one god conflicts with the apparent universal compulsion of the time to humanise the divine. Through Antiquity the projection of human attributes was distributed among a large number of gods, gods of war, gods (or more usually goddesses) of love, of farming, hunting and of all human activity. The notion of one god encompassing all these attributes and failings perhaps made no sense to the ancient mind, any more than one person being in control of everything.

So you dehumanise your god, remove the human attributes. In Egypt, Akhenaten attempted this by forbidding any representations of Aten other than the rays of the sun. Zarathustra attempted this in what is now Iran by presenting Ahura Mazda, the primary deity of Zoroastrianism, as pure animating spirit, transcendent and impersonal. But these revolutions were not generally accepted by the people at the time. The very notion of a dehumanised god appeared to contradict the cognitive processes whereby the perception of gods arose in the first place. But the idea did start to take root in the most unlikely of situations. More of these developments, bringing on the dawn of monotheism, in my next article.

Neil Meldrum

"So what's this? I asked for a hammer! A hammer! This is a crescent wrench… Well, maybe it's a hammer… damn these stone tools."



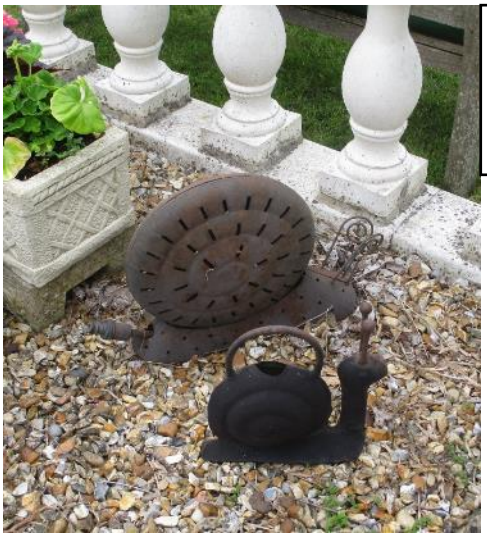
EDAS members taste freedom

On June 24th, nineteen members of EDAS enjoyed a visit to Mike Allen's laboratory followed by a guided walk through the Stonehenge landscape, which Mike interpreted for us in the light of his new findings about the prehistoric chalkland landscapes of Stonehenge, Avebury and Dorchester.

AEA Allen Environmental Archaeology was established in 2007 as a small environmental archaeology and geoarchaeology facility undertaking archaeological science for commercial archaeologists, and research projects (university-based and other). Mike also co-ordinates environmental archaeology (charred plant, charcoal, pollen, diatoms, foraminifera, marine shells), geoarchaeology (land snails, sediments soil micromorphology) and dating (C14, OSL) for projects all over the country. His work addresses specific archaeological questions, looking from the artefacts to the landscape beyond.

This is the first trip that EDAS has been able to arrange since lockdown. It really lifted peoples' spirits and is, we hope, the first step back to the new normal. Here is record of the trip in pictures.

Vanessa Joseph



As a leading conchologist, Mike Allen is known in the trade as the 'snail man' No one was surprised to see his trademark molluscs everywhere.

Mike with his bespoke Russian corer used for peat and pollen sampling. He also has an impressive collection of hand augers and the lab has facilities for processing (bespoke sink and sieves) and drying (ovens) , geoarchaeological bench, and analysis/study area with a range of microscopes.

Because pollen rarely survives on chalk, snails from sieved soil samples are used to interpret the landscape. Different species prefer open country to woodland habitats. Mike described examining microscopic or sub-microscopic samples as 'glancing into a completely different world'.

Lindsey kindly supplied a range of delicious cakes to accompany our packed lunches.

Standing on Amesbury 42 Neolithic long barrow, near the Greater Cursus. A test pit excavation in 2009 revealed a chalk cap and soil which proved that the area around Stonehenge was an open, not wooded, landscape. There would have been trees and shrubs, with animals browsing and grazing. The land would have invited humans to settle there without the necessity for them to clear the woodland.

The Bronze Age burial mounds on King Barrow Ridge were built not of chalk but of turf and soil. These barrows can be seen on the skyline and clearly respect the monument. Even before they were built, the ridge itself was an important place where people gathered, perhaps on their way to Stonehenge.

Walking the Avenue, the prehistoric approach to Stonehenge, we are in a 'designed' landscape. The monument and Cursus burial mounds suddenly disappear as the Avenue leads down into the valley. Excavations have revealed that where the route turns left, there was a chalk gravel mound – a signpost in the prehistoric world?

The final ascent. From the brow of the hill, the Avenue starts to narrow; lines converge adding to the perspective. Stonehenge gradually appears. Mike explained that naturally occurring periglacial stripes, hardly visible now, would have drawn all eyes to the monument where sun, sky and land met.

Web Link Highlights Midsummer 2021

Plenty of internet items for the summer newsletter, and two radio items. The first was a piece on the Roman hoard found by detectorists featured on 'Today' on Radio 4, with commentary by Guy de la Bédoyére - it was good to hear him again. Listen to Today - 20/05/2021 - BBC Sounds at 1hr 45 mins (Thursday 20th May at 7.45am).

The second radio link featured the re-evaluation of the 'Dragon Man' skull found in 1933. As well as the internet item listed, it also made the 'PM' programme on the 25th June at 17:50. Worth listening to as they interviewed Chris Stringer who was involved in the work.

You wait for months for a Time Team regular to pop up in the archaeology news, and then another comes along. This time it is Helen Geake, in her day job as Norfolk Finds Liaison Officer, commenting on the rare Edward III gold coin found by a detectorist.

Have I got this wrong? I thought a fossil was an organic artefact that had, over time, reacted with the surrounding minerals to create an 'image' of the original item, but in an inorganic material. But the photograph of the finds of a ‘new hominid in Israel‘ clearly show that the bone and teeth have not been transformed. And this article is from a science media source!

While I am on a 'grumpy' note, the item about the rescue archaeology in Dorset ahead of the burying of a power cable is both interesting and frustrating. Why should that be? By chance and at the last minute, I found out about a webcast by the Dorset Archaeology unit on archaeology in Dorset over the last year, and it included a presentation on this project. After the webcast I contacted several other local historical/archaeological societies to find out if they knew about this webcast but NONE did! I found out because it was announced in a 'Dorset Council' newsletter which my wife receives as she is a Town Councillor, so a pretty limited audience.

Alan Dedden

Midsummer Weblinks

1,600 Year Old Mosaic Found In Israel here

Bones From The Ice Age Found When Digging Pool In Back Yard In Nevada here

Billion Year Old Fossil Found In Loch Torridon here

Rome Colosseum To Get New Floor here

Rare Coin Lost By First English Settler Found At Maryland Fort here

New Sabre Tooth Cat Identified In American Museum Collection here

New Study Shows Mary Rose Crew Was Multi-ethnic here

Thousands Of Bodies To Be Removed From Medieval Church Site On HS2 Line here

Oldest Known African Burial Found In Kenya Is 78,000 Years Old here

New Research Shows Tiny Dinosaur Had 'Extraordinary' Night Vision And Owl-like Hearing here

Heritage Bosses Aim To Turn Hadrian's Wall Into Tourist Hotspot here

Remains Of Nine Neanderthals Found In Cave South Of Rome here

Franklin Expedition Member From HMS Erebus Identified here

Bronze Age Hoard Discovered In Sweden here

British Museum Assists With Return Of 2,000 Year Old Statue To Libya here

Torlonia Marbles Restored And Placed On Display here

Tiny DNA Traces Left In Spanish Cave Reveals Changing Populations here

Stolen Fresco Fragments Returned To Pompeii After Police Investigation here

Detectorist Finds Stolen Hoard On First Outing here

Roman Hoard Found By Detectorists Goes To Auction here

Roman Bath Complex Found On Spanish Beach here

Park Ranger Finds Treasure Trove Of Fossils here

New Analysis Exposes Violence Of Stone Age Conflict here

Somersham Headless Bodies Were Victims Of Roman Executions here

Prehistoric Red Deer Carvings Found In Scottish Neolithic Tomb By BU Graduate here

'Centuries-Old' Human Bones Found Near Harry And Megan's California Home here

Shackled Skeleton Identified As Rare Evidence Of Slavery In Roman Britain here

Scientists Say New Dinosaur Species Is Largest Found In Australia here

Related Male Viking Skeletons To Be Reunited here

Burial Of Power Cable Across Dorset AONB Uncovers 6,000 Years Of History here

Dedicated Followers Of Medieval Fashion Suffered Bunions here

Bradford Archaeology Students Uncover Victorian Street On Campus here

'Minature Pompeii' Found Under Cinema In Verona here

Wreck Of 'The Griffin' Identified 350 Years After Sinking here

Footprints Of Possibly Last Dinosaurs In Britain Found In Kent here

Gold Coins Lost At Time Of Black Death Found In Norfolk here

Iron Age People Were Emotionally Attached To Objects here

New Hominid Species Found At Israeli Site here

Scientists Identify New Species Of Human Named 'Dragon Man' here

Storms Expose Hundreds Of Skeletons On Pembrokeshire Beach here

Expedition In 2022 To Find Shackleton's '*Endurance*' here

Detectorist Finds Gold Posy Ring In Scottish Field here

103 Million Year Old Dinosaur Found At Oregon 'Fossil Hotspot' here

Derbyshire Cave House Identified As Ninth Century Home here

A reminder about the Council for British Archaeology's 2021 Festival of Archaeology ***HERE****, as well as information about some of their online events and courses – this is all happening now, so sorry I wasn't able to send this out earlier.*

There's also more about some local events in the Festival, as well as other non-archaeological news and events, in the newsletter from Cranborne Chase AONB ***HERE***

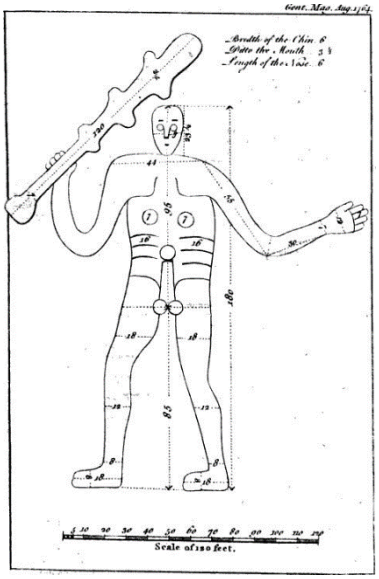
Dating the Giant at Cerne Abbas

The famous General Augustus Lane Fox Pitt Rivers died in 1900 at the age of 73, resulting in huge death duties on his enormous estate. Cerne Abbas, once a thriving community and small market town, had suffered a severe decline in the second half of the 19th century, reflecting a nationwide downturn in the rural economy, with the population halving in 50 years. The decline continued through the First World War, and the General's son and heir, Alexander Edward, decided that this part of the estate was no longer needed. The village, as it had become, with 4,700 acres of land and rural properties, was auctioned at Dorchester on 24th September 1919, raising £67,402, the equivalent of around £3.5m now.

In fact, the decline of Cerne Abbas continued into the 1930s, when people began to discover the charms of the area, moved in and began making the buildings serviceable again. This must have been a considerable task as a report as early as 1906 revealed that the village was "decaying and strangely silent". Grass grew in the streets, houses were deserted and windows boarded up. The state of the medieval jetty-fronted houses in Abbey Street by the time of the auction can be seen in the photograph; now they are Grade 1 listed and 'a jewel of the village'.

The Cerne Abbas Giant wasn't included in the sale but was given to the National Trust in 1920, along with its one acre site. Within 4 years it had been scheduled as an ancient monument, but how ancient has always been something of a mystery. There have been many suggestions, ranging from the late Iron Age to the 17th century.

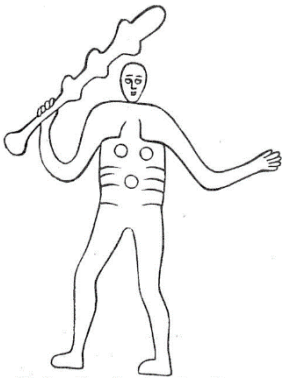
Some have compared it stylistically with a representation of the god *Nodens* on a skillet handle found at Hod Hill and dated to the first half of the first century AD, implying a Durotrigian construction. On rather flimsy grounds, a Romano-British date was proposed because the Giant resembled representations of the demi-god Hercules. An editor of the 1789 edition of William Camden's *Britannia* opined that it was Saxon and associated with a god whose name contained some variant of the element *Hel*, ostensibly worshipped by the pagan inhabitants then. The antiquarian William Stukeley took a similar line, saying that the locals referred to the figure as *Helis* and suggesting that this was a garbled version of Hercules.



Hutchins' Dorset History of 1774 said it was made in the previous century, perhaps by Cerne Abbas landowner Lord Holles, although he thought it possible that Holles had a much older figure recut. It has been suggested that it was done in mockery of Oliver Cromwell, whom Holles had grown to despise; the club would link to Cromwell's military rule and the phallus mocked Puritanism. A 17th century date had much to recommend it in that surviving records from Cerne Abbey don't mention the giant, nor does it appear in a detailed survey of the area by John Norden in 1617. The first known record was in 1694, when the Churchwarden's Accounts for St Mary's in Cerne Abbas state "for repairing ye Giant, three shillings". The earliest known depiction is from the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1764, as shown.

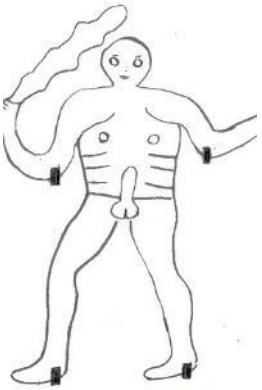
What has been called 'Britain's most famous phallus' isn't thought by some to be original, and there have also been suggestions that the figure was originally clothed, although I was unable to find the evidence which is said to show this. The phallus has certainly been extended to incorporate the navel shown here, with the best evidence being that this was done when the figure was recut in 1908.

In 1921 Walter Long of Gillingham, Dorset, objected to the nudity and conducted a campaign to cover its supposed obscenity with a leaf. Although the protest gained some support, the Home Office apparently considered it to be of humorous intent. The Victorians had their own answer to the 'indecency'; they simply ignored it, as in the 1842 drawing here. An editorial in *Antiquity* in 1976 commented that postcards of the Giant were the only indecent photographs that could be sent through the mail.



It has been thought that there was a depiction of material draped over the left arm, which resistivity surveys imply may be correct, perhaps a cloak or a lion skin. That supports the idea of the figure being Hercules, who is sometimes depicted with a cloak from the skin of the Nemean Lion (a vicious monster in Greek mythology eventually killed by Heracles – Hercules to the Romans). Analysis of Lidar done as part of the recent work shows that there was originally a belt across the waist, as suggested earlier, and gives credence to lettering between the lower legs which Hutchins had described, with traces perhaps reading "798 jnq".

The National Trust were keen to try to resolve the dating issues, particularly for the centenary of their ownership in July 2020. By 2019 funding was in place and Scheduled Monument Consent had been obtained. Martin Papworth of the National Trust was in charge of the archaeology, with Mike Allen of Allen Environmental Archaeology particularly looking at snail evidence and Prof Phillip Toms (University of Gloucestershire) overseeing the Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) work. OSL is a technique to measure the time since grains of quartz (basically sand) were last exposed to light. Early in March 2020, in cold and windy weather, small sections were cut across the giant, their placement (in the drawing) partly determined by the rain pouring down the steep slopes.



It was tough work digging through the different layers of re-chalking, variously described as kibbled, knobbly, smooth, silty, chunky, etc., with samples taken at different levels down to the natural at about 1 metre depth. They had, though, finished just in time to hear the announcement of the first lockdown, presumably on 23rd March 2020, which made analysis by the centenary impossible.

On 12th May 2021, the National Trust revealed that Britain's largest chalk figure was probably first created in the late Saxon period. Geoarchaeologist Mike Allen (who coincidentally delivered his EDAS lecture that same evening) told us that the age result was "not what was expected". He said: "Everyone was wrong and that makes these results even more exciting." The giant's elbow can be roughly dated to AD 980 and his foot to AD 910.

The NT website has the OSL results giving a date range of 700-1100AD, with a statement that "other samples … gave later dates of up to 1560". Martin Papworth (shown here making a section drawing) thinks it's possible that the Giant was a late Saxon creation which became grassed over and neglected for several hundred years. Benedictine Cerne Abbey was founded in 978 and one theory is that the figure was created by the heathen villagers, worshippers of the fertility god *Heilis* (or similar), in opposition to the monks. But, as Martin Papworth said, "To narrow down a date for him is a great thing to achieve, and we're closer now. Future research could tell us even more about how he changed over time". The Giant still retains some mysteries.

Meanwhile, you can click **HERE** to see the NT information and a 'fly-through' video that explores the landmark virtually.

Geoff Taylor/Janet Bartlet

Some of you will have had messages from me that an email I sent to you from the EDAS address has 'bounced' back with a message to me that it can't or won't be delivered. It isn't always clear why that has happened (and I know from personal experience that emails which "can't be delivered" are sometimes received!). This was particularly happening with btinternet.com email addresses and some others handled by BT (e.g. some Yahoo ones), though that seems to have stopped. More recently hotmail.co.uk addresses have been affected.

I do all I can to ensure that our communications aren't seen as Junk (or Spam), and to re-send ones returned to me, especially if they are important (like newsletters and AGM papers). They may then come from my personal email address if nothing else works, but will usually be at least 2 days late.

If you're affected, it may help if you add the EDAS email address to your 'safe senders' list. You may have to Google how to do that, but it is often in Settings when logged in, under something like 'Safe Senders folder' or 'Junk email options'. If one of our communications goes to your Junk folder, you should mark it as 'Not Junk' (often just by a right click and selecting from a drop-down menu).

The Hardy Monument

Many, perhaps most of you, will know a lot about the Hardy Monument, near Portesham between Dorchester and Bridport, though I think there will be at least one thing here that you didn't know:

Built in 1844, the monument is 72 feet (22m) high, with the top 850 feet (260m) above sea level, so that it can be seen from the sea 60 miles, or almost 100km, away. It was, in fact, made to be a landmark for shipping, and has been shown on Admiralty charts since 1846. That's clearly appropriate for a memorial to Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy (1769-1839), the Flag Captain of HMS Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. It was, of course, he who held Nelson in his arms as he lay dying, and to whom Nelson apparently said "Kiss me Hardy".

There is no connection to Thomas Hardy, the writer, who was only 4 years old when it was built. He is, though, said to have liked the fact that he could see the monument from his home at Max Gate.

The octagonal monument, with corners aligned to compass points, was designed to look like a spyglass of the type Admiral Hardy would have used. It has, though, also been compared to "a 70 foot sink plunger", "a pepper mill", "a factory chimney with a skirt" and "a peppermill".

EDAS PROGRAMME

Unless otherwise stated, subject to coronavirus restrictions and possible new approach, lectures are from 7:30 – 9:30 pm at St Catherine's Church Hall, Lewens Lane, Wimborne, BH21 1LE.

2021			
Wed 8th September	Zoom lecture	**Dr Lucy Shipley**	The Etruscans
Wed 13th October	Lecture	**Prof Dave Parham**	Bronze Age Shipwrecks
Wed 10th November	Lecture	**Francis Taylor**	The Khmer Empire
Wed 8th December	Lecture	**Dr Leonard Baker**	The Most Riotous Unprincipled Men
2022			
Wed 12th January	Lecture	**Rob Curtis**	It's A Grave Business
Wed 9th February	Lecture	**Prof Tim Darvill**	Sticks and Stones and Broken Bones
Wed 9th March	AGM & talk	**Speaker(s) tbd**	Wimborne All Hallows Church and Graveyard
Wed 6th April	Lecture	**Dr Denise Allen**	Roman Glass In Britain
Wed 11th May	Zoom Lecture (tbc)	**Dr Jim Leary**	The Vale of Pewsey Project - Marden Henge and Cat's Brain Long Barrow

DISTRICT DIARY

I thought it was time to put this back in with things 'opening up', but I've checked all the websites below and not found any updates or current programmes as yet. No doubt some will appear in the near future, but do let me know of anything you know or hear.

Archaeology Societies

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