East Dorset Antiquarian Society

Charity No: 1171828

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 – November 2021

Editor's Notes

Welcome to another edition of the newsletter and, sadly, to darker evenings. One day a government will realise that changing the clocks really doesn't make much sense and even have the courage to do something about it. Or perhaps you disagree?

We were very pleased to be able to **Return to St. Catherine's Hall** for the first time since the 2020 AGM, as described in Andrew's letter. Phil D'Eath has kindly written the summary of Dave Parham's talk on **Bronze Age (and other) Shipwrecks**, though Dave's slides didn't come through in time so the photographs have been found on the internet.

We are hopeful of another good attendance for Francis Taylor's lecture on the 10th about *The Khmer Empire* of south-east Asia, covering the series of Khmer-speaking kingdoms from the 4th-17th centuries. You may remember that Francis was kind enough to step in at fairly short notice and give our first *Zoom* lecture on The Mayans in September last year.

The previous article on Egypt in May left us with a visit to and around Aswan. With the help of Jo and Sue Crane's photographs and memories, this final article looks at two well-known temples that were moved away from the lakes created by damming the Nile – **Philae and Abu Simbel**.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Neil Meldrum for his series of articles which, due to lack of space, had to skip last month's newsletter. The 11th in the series, **The Enigma of Zarathustra**, tells the fascinating, and to me almost completely new, story of the emergence of Zoroastrianism and its importance as a precursor to current monotheistic religions.

I am, of course, equally grateful to Alan Dedden and to Jo Crane & Sue Newman for continuing, over a very long time, to provide us information to help round out our archaeological knowledge. Alan's list of articles found on the internet is, if I've counted correctly, the 42nd, i.e. **October's Weblinks** and **Highlights**. **View from Above** started earlier but I've skipped months occasionally, which isn't really possible with the Weblinks. It has now reached number 39, though I've departed from the usual approach and not used one of Sue and Jo's photos this time.

This time I've had to leave out *Remembering the Romans* for lack of space, but the **EDAS Programme** and **District Diary** complete the newsletter as usual.

Could we add you to the list of illustrious contributors? Let me know.
Geoff Taylor

Return to St Catherine's Hall

Dear members and friends of the Society,

Last month we returned to St Catherine's Hall, our first EDAS live lecture for over 19 months. I was delighted and somewhat relieved that 43 members and guests chose to attend the talk by Professor Dave Parham on Bronze Age shipwrecks.

This was always going to be a significant event and, as the evening progressed, there was a sense of normality and relief that the society had taken another step towards 'living with Covid'. There were a few adjustments: we asked people to register on arrival, hand sanitizer was available and people spread out over the available seating. We had decided not to have a refreshment break but there is plenty of opportunity to catch up before and after the talk.

Throughout the months of isolation we have organised several outdoor events and we knew that many members were keen for the lecture programme to return to live talks as soon as possible. Also, many speakers had volunteered that they really missed the interaction with a live audience, even with the obvious benefits offered by Zoom.

On the evening Dave Parham admitted that he was quite excited and very pleased to be with us, and explained that this was his first talk to a live audience for 20 months. As the evening progressed his enjoyment became obvious as he treated us to a plethora of interesting anecdotes and asides.

Towards the end of the evening I was pleased to be introduced to Chezzie Hollow, the new Director of the Museum of East Dorset, who came as a guest of Vanessa and Sara. She was suitably impressed by the talk and the Society, and I'm sure that we will continue our close relationship with the museum in the future.

I know that it is not easy for everyone to return to St Catherine's Hall, but we look forward to seeing most of you again in the near future. Do let us know if you have any thoughts on these matters.

Keep well and best wishes,

Andrew

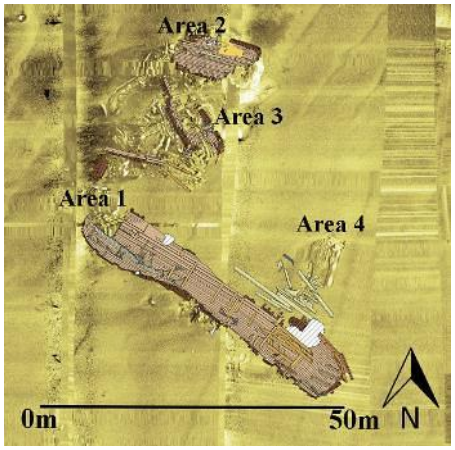
Bronze Age (and other) Shipwrecks – Lecture by Prof Dave Parham

"Bumping into humpback whales" off the coast of Oman was just one of the occupational hazards and joys that were alluded to during this talk. Dave included an update on wrecks excavated and inspected by Bournemouth University over the past 20 years, as well as the promised historical review of both British and Mediterranean Bronze Age maritime archaeological finds.

Bournemouth University maritime excavations

Perhaps the most well-known excavation undertaken by BU was of the Swash channel wreck in Poole Bay between 2006 and 2013. The vessel turned out to be a 17th C armed merchantman, probably of Dutch origin, and wrecked around 1631. Its rescue recovery was the largest undertaken since the Mary Rose, entailing considerable subsequent research and writing-up, though the excavation report is now almost ready for publication.

More recently, work has been undertaken to rescue the remains of the mid-18th C (wrecked 1744) warship *Invincible* in the Solent, as it was in danger of being lost through channel/tidal changes and erosion (John Bingeman's original site plan is shown). Originally a French built ship, *Invincible* was captured and commandeered by the English navy. It is considered to be the best preserved vessel of its kind in the UK, with much of the contents having been found intact. Several EDAS members have been involved in the post-excavation work, and conservation of artefacts is under way. The excavated material will eventually be housed at the Royal Navy Dockyard in Portsmouth.



The remains of a small English warship from about 1592, just 4 years after the Spanish Armada, were found off Alderney. Other warships from the period aren't uncommon, but this is the only English one known so far. Muskets found on board and a matched set of cannons revealed the cutting-edge technology that was being used in naval warfare at the time. Further afield, the university were involved in excavating an early 16th C Portuguese wreck off the coast of Oman, probably the *Esmeralda* from Vicente Sodré's squadron of the 4th Portuguese Indian Armada (Sodré was the uncle of the explorer Vasco De Gama who led the expedition). Finds included the earliest known astrolabe (an astronomical instrument used in navigation), pottery from Africa which could be used to track trade routes, peppers and stone cannon balls.

Excavated 20th C wrecks have included sunken armaments, including pre-Normandy landing vessels at Salcombe in Devon, amphibious 'Valentine' tanks in Studland Bay (shown) and the first type of Lighter Barge (*c*. 1918), used to help launch seaplanes from the ocean surface, which was found in Brandy Bay, Poole Harbour. Investigations into the importance of mines in disrupting the activities of submarines during the 2nd World War in the Irish sea and Jutland have been taking place over the past few months.

Bronze Age Wrecks

It is known that there was significant Continental overseas trade during the Bronze Age between Britain and Europe, evidenced by discoveries of implements such as palstaves and polished hand axes, known to have been made elsewhere. It is thought that metals were usually transported in bulk to be worked at their final destination, often carried as roughly manufactured objects, rather than raw metal, as this made them more portable. Bronze from that period is relatively rare as, of course, it could easily be

recycled. Identifying the source of ancient bronze mainly depends on the artefact and its manufacture, since the metal is usually from many original sources.

Nevertheless, many Bronze Age items have been found in the sea and on riverbeds, but it is not always easy to identify whether they have been deposited as the result of a cargo being lost overboard accidentally, through a vessel being wrecked or even as a result of a ritual deposit. The motion of the sea easily results in objects becoming damaged through rolling, making it hard to recognise what they were and whether they were deposited at the same time as, and with, other similar items that may have been found some distance away.

A hoard found at Langdon Bay, not far from Dover harbour, between 1974 and 1992 survived together because it entered the sea at a point where there were chalk ridges on the sea bed into which the metal objects fell. They became trapped, thus remaining as a 'group' deposit and not being damaged by being buffeted around by the movement of the sea. They were discovered by the local sub-aqua club when the sand covering them began to disappear through the action of currents. The initial hoard of 86 bronze objects, estimated to date from 1200-1000BC, included winged axes, spatulate axes, 2 spearheads, daggers and palstaves. In all 357 artefacts were eventually recovered comprising tools, weapons, ornaments and scrap. They appear to have been collected from a variety of locations including the Atlantic coast, central France and even the Swiss/French border area. All were purchased by the British Museum but are based on loan in Dover Boat Museum.

Although there was no trace of the wreckage of a vessel, a Bronze Age boat with an earlier date of between 1575-1520BC was discovered under a road in Dover in 1991. 9.5 metres of it was recovered, although it is possible that this was only 2/3 of the complete size. Made of oak planks stitched together with yew withies, it was 2 metres wide – sufficient for two people seated side by side. It was one of only 20 from this period found in Britain and very different from more primitive hollowed log boats. Whether it was a sea going vessel is unknown.

At Moor Sand, near Salcombe in Devon, a Bronze Age sword (as shown; length 64cm) dating from about

1200BC was discovered in 1977 at the second oldest shipwreck site in Britain. Follow-up investigations, led by the persevering maritime archaeologist Keith Muckelroy using a metal detector, revealed a further 9 bronze objects in 1979. Exploration continued at what he believed to be a major site until funding dried up in the 1990s. A short time later, following his death, major discoveries were made 300m away, including a large hoard of African gold coins thought to have come from a wreck dating from the 1640s. However, an increasing number of prehistoric artefacts, many from the Continent, were also being found, including jewellery, a finger ingot,

Middle Bronze Age swords, palstaves, raw copper and tin, a hammer, a socketed instrument from Italy and small fine tools, all of which seemed to suggest that the Bronze Age finds came from a single wreck. The jewellery (above) included folded up gold bracelets and torcs, which are considered to be among the finest twisted gold ever been found from the Middle Bronze Age. Confusingly there was a Late Bronze Age sword and lots of metal ingots found a short distance away, so there may be more than one ancient wreck in the area.

Other potential Bronze Age wreck sites in the UK include Freshwater in Pembrokeshire, where 5 ingots were found on a beach. At the Erme Estuary in South Devon, tin ingots were found in a bay surrounded by a reef (as well as bowl and knuckle shaped artefacts that could be Iron Age or Romano-British).

Many important ancient wrecks, particularly of the Greek and Roman periods, but including Bronze Age ones, have been discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean, often by sponge divers. The most famous are probably those at Cape Gelidonya and nearby Uluburun in Southern Turkey.

The Cape Gelidonya shipwreck was of roughly the same date as Langdon Bay, the oldest known when found and the first to be excavated to modern standards, early in the 1960s. It contained large numbers of metalworking tools, with the bulk of the cargo being the ingredients for making bronze implements – scrap bronze, tin and copper oxhide ingots. It is thought to have been the ship of a travelling tinker.

The Uluburun shipwreck, found in 1982 and excavated up to 1994, dates from about 1330 BC. It was a large ship, *c.*19m long, with a large, and mostly intact, cargo that included 10 tons of bronze ingots, a ton of tin ingots, gold and ivory ornaments, glass and even an ostrich egg. There are indications that the owner may have been a tax collector, perhaps Mycenaean judging by the pottery 'stirrup jars' found. The goods carried were mainly for trade, coming from all around the Mediterranean and beyond as far as the Baltic, showing the sophisticated network that existed in the Bronze Age. The replica shown here is on display in the Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology.

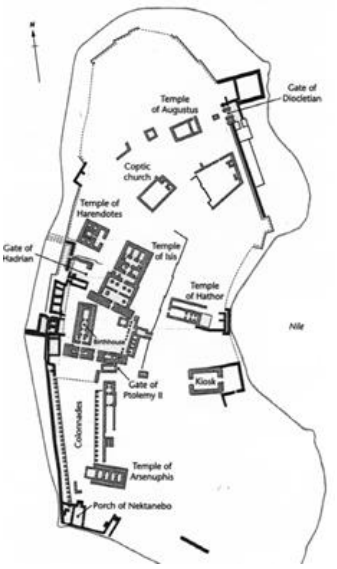
Dave concluded by saying that, as well as the groups of discoveries that have been made on the south coast of England, there have been isolated finds that could point to further presence of wrecks. One of these was a Scillonian axe from about 800BC found by a fisherman off Hengistbury Head. Whether this was a one-off loss of an artefact or even a deposit by an antiquarian is unknown though, as with other limited finds, the possibility of artefacts moving from dredging can't be ruled out.

Surprisingly, to date, there have been virtually no Iron Age shipwrecks found in the UK. What we can be sure of is that, if there is any hint of one being located, Dave Parham will be the first to be there to check it out.

Phil D'Eath

Egypt 5: Philae and Abu Simbel

Those of us old enough and interested enough will remember the massive campaigns to move the temples of Philae and Abu Simbel, amongst others, in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of these, like Abu Simbel, were to avoid damage from the rising waters of Lake Nasser with the completion of the Aswan High Dam about 7km south of the city. Philae, though, was being moved above the flooding caused by the construction of Aswan Low Dam in 1902, and its subsequent heightening.

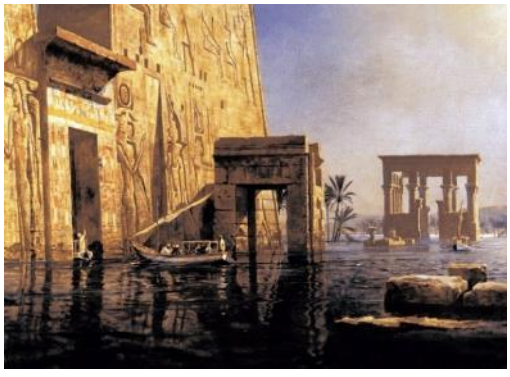


Although blocks were found on Philae Island dating as far back as the 15th century BC, and pottery sherds from much earlier, the earliest certain work was a small building around 700 BC. There was some further dynastic building, but around 70% of what remains is Ptolemaic (from *c*.280 BC), some is from Nubian kings around the same period and there is also a good deal of Roman-period building and decoration. The main temple to Isis and its subsidiary buildings covered a good portion of the original island, with its angled entry and processional way. As can be seen, even the major buildings that survived still covered much of the remaining space, especially allowing for the paving around and between them. Much of the rest was used for service buildings and housing for the priests who lived there.

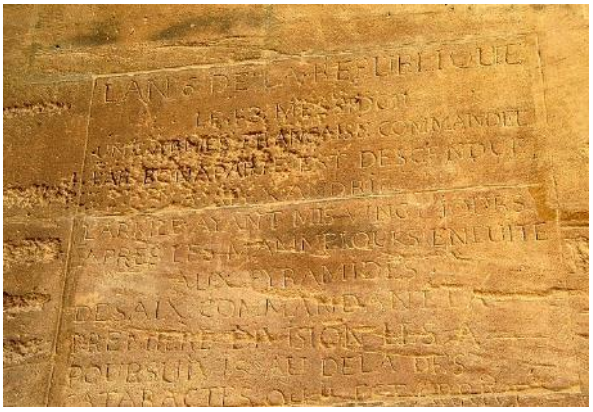
The temples and other buildings on Philae Island had mostly survived fairly well into the 19th century,

despite some losses to the Nile and some destruction under the Christians. This was mainly the result of continued pagan worship there. Philae was at or close to the boundary after Diocletian withdrew from Lower Nubia around 300 AD, and the Nubians continued to use Philae, even after Theodosius I ordered all pagan temples closed in 392. A treaty of 453 specifically allowed pagan use of Philae and, it seems, there was co-existence with the Christians until Justinian ordered Philae's suppression in 535 AD. Even then, it was 40 years before Christians began to carve crosses in the reliefs and razed the small Arsenuphis temple to build a church. Within another century the area was dominated by the Muslims; settlement began on the island and continued until the late 19th century.

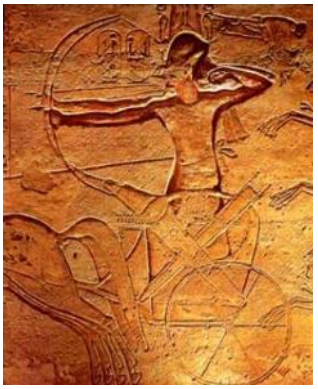
Treasure hunting by the inhabitants, early explorers and archaeologists seems to have been quite severe with, for example, an 1860s coin found 2 metres down when the buildings were moved. William Bankes took one of the Philae obelisks (the other was broken), which was erected at Kingston Lacy in 1829. It actually helped in deciphering hieroglyphs, showing that those for Cleopatra and Ptolemy were phonetic, i.e. represented sounds. Strengthening of foundations ahead of the Low Dam construction then cleared so much that not one early house plan could be drawn. The Low Dam was built across part of the First Nile Cataract, near the southern edge of Aswan. Many sources seem to suggest that the island was above the waters before the dam was built, but the 1830s watercolour by artist David Roberts shows that Philae could be inundated during the higher annual Nile floods.



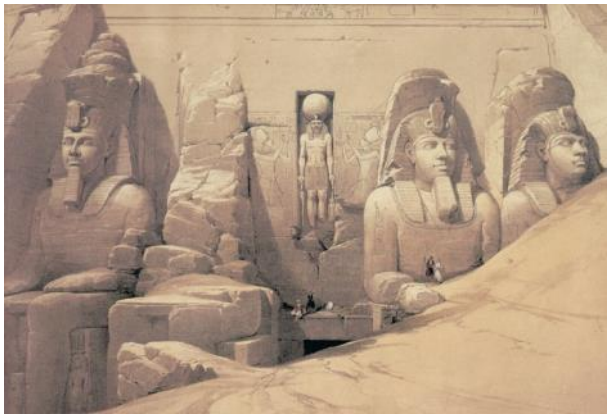
However, after 1902 Philae was only free of water from July to October when the dam's sluices were open and, with subsequent raising of the dam, was underwater up to a third of the buildings' heights year round. The buildings were secure but reliefs lost their colours and became encrusted in silt and debris. The UNESCO project to move the Philae complex and temples threatened by the Aswan High Dam's completion in 1970, started in the 1960s. Nearby Agilkia Island was shaped to resemble Philae and the buildings cleaned, dismantled into 40,000 pieces and transported to their new home. The 'new Philae' was opened in 1980 with no obvious signs that it was ever anywhere else. Even the graffiti has been preserved (this is French from 1798, on an inscription previously erased by early Christians).



The famous temples of Abu Simbel are about 230km south west of Aswan, though rather longer by road, and 50km from the land border with Sudan (Lake Nasser that built up behind the Aswan High Dam actually continues another 30km or so, but Sudan's lake border extends north of the land border). They were carved directly from the rock on the banks of the Nile in the 13th century BC under Ramesses II ('the Great') to celebrate his victory over the Hittites at the Battle of Kadesh in 1274 BC. The battle, near the modern Lebanon-Syria border, is probably the best documented battle of ancient times and believed to have been the largest chariot battle ever fought, involving over 5,000 chariots. Ramesses is shown on his chariot on a relief in the temple.



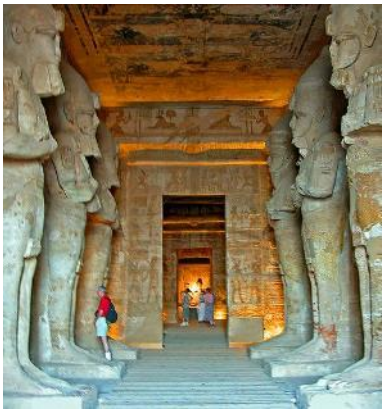
The two temples, near what was then the Second Nile Cataract, are an enduring monument to Ramesses and his wife, Nefertari, with no evidence that there was ever any later work on them. It is believed that the head fell from one of the statues of Ramesses during an earthquake not long after the temples were completed. After they fell out of use the temples gradually became covered in sand and, although rediscovered in 1813, it took until 1817 to enter the complex. This 1830s watercolour by David Roberts shows that there was still a great deal of sand to be cleared for a proper appreciation of the remains. I recommend searching for Roberts' art on the internet for some fascinating views of Egyptian monuments then, many still more deeply buried than here.



The UNESCO-sponsored project to save the temples from the waters of Lake Nasser apparently took only from 1964-1968 to complete, but at a cost equivalent to around £300m now. The temple was cut into blocks of up to 30 tons and lifted to fit into an artificial hill 65m higher and 200m further back. This was a stunning feet of engineering, with the statues of Ramesses 21m high (Nefertari's are half the height) and the interior of his temple stretching 64m into the rock. Alignment was also critical to replicate what was originally built, so that the rising sun shines directly into the main temple to illuminate the rear wall on October 22nd and February 22nd. Philae was, of course, built of separate blocks that could be lifted and refitted, but saving Abu Simbel required cutting the rock. I looked hard for any traces of joins, especially inside, but couldn't see any.

Visiting the site involves waking early to leave around 4am, whether you take the 4 hour (each way) bus journey across the desert or fly from Aswan to the runway built specially for the temples. Flying does give the benefit of being able to watch the sun rise over the lake and then illuminate the temples with relatively few others there. I recall leaving the souvenir market that inevitably goes with such a visit just as the coaches started to arrive. The downside was that the light was relatively dull for photographs, so that Jo & Sue's are much brighter and clearer than mine.

As Jo reminded me, no photographs are allowed inside the temples, as with the tombs in the Valley of the Kings, but cheating or bribing the officials isn't uncommon. Since none of us did that, the ones here were found online, one of Ramesses' statues lining the entrance to his temple , the other showing Nefertari offering gifts to the seated goddess Hathor.



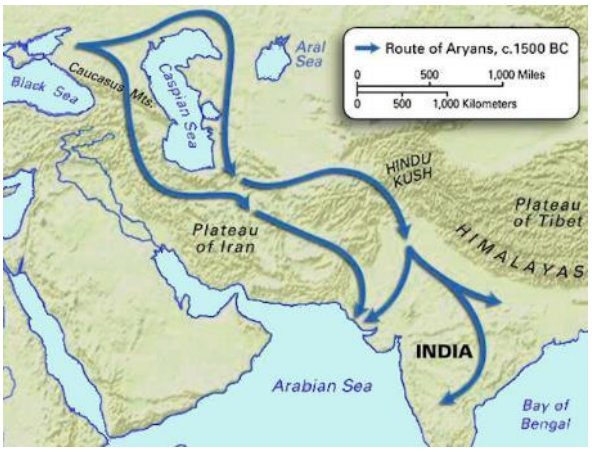
After the journey back to Aswan and downriver to Luxor, it was time to return to England, and that's where we'll leave this series of articles on Egypt.

Geoff Taylor/Jo & Sue Crane

The Enigma of Zarathustra

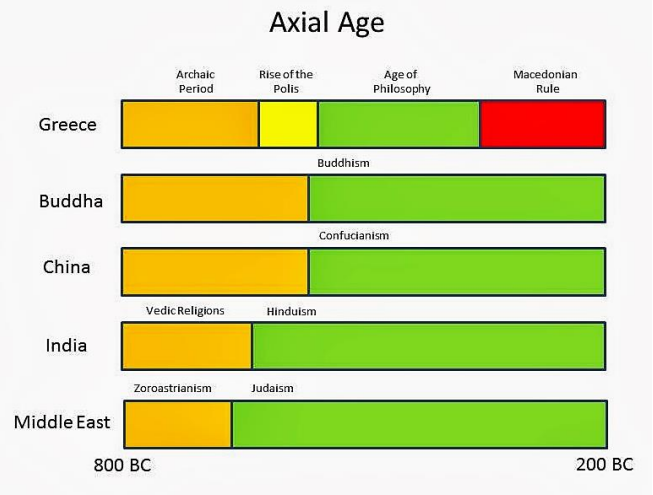
In the latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries, in certain circles, a lot of nonsense was talked about the Aryans as some kind of super-race destined to dominate the world. Fortunately, subsequent rationalisation has shown this to be what it has always been – abject nonsense. Homo Sapiens has evolved as a distinct species but with wide variations depending entirely on the environment where a particular grouping may have matured and then mixed with other groupings. There is no innate superiority in any grouping, only differences in ways of life and customs, although it is now becoming increasingly apparent that Homo Sapiens is not as thoroughbred as was once thought to be the case. So-called Caucasian peoples may have up to 5%, or even more, Neanderthal heritage. Further east people may have a similar percentage of Denisovan heritage: other peoples, goodness knows what? It does appear that we all may be quite a mongrel lot but still all moulded by an emotive and unique human spirit and human capabilities.

But back to the Aryans. No doubt, as with other peoples, they grew from a hotchpotch of small human groupings in a particular area to eventually become, around 2000 BCE, a distinct culture. They initially inhabited a region to the north of the Black and Caspian Seas. Over the next few hundred years they started to migrate in two distinct directions. As with all early peoples the causes for such migrations are unclear and many reasons have been put forward: the old favourites are climate change and degradation of original hunting grounds. Perhaps other groups were closing in on them and perhaps a major factor was the all-too-human propensity to wander, discover new lands and experiences. One group of Aryans wandered south-eastwards into the Punjab region of India and Pakistan; more about them in later articles. Another group wandered southwards into modern day Iran. In each case they mixed with other cultures who were already there and, in both cases, created distinct civilisations.



A fundamental influence on the (non-Aryan) Hebrews, and certainly on later Greek rationalism and Christianity, was the religious evolution of early Iran following Aryan infiltration. The story really begins with Zarathustra (Zoroaster in ancient Greek) who evidently lived in eastern Iran. Dating is very uncertain, and although it has been contended that he lived some time between 1200 and 550 BCE, later dating is now more accepted. There are no contemporary portrayals of Zarathustra, but he has often subsequently been portrayed as a Christ-like figure. Perhaps though, like so many religious reformers, we should not look upon Zarathustra as a distinct individual but rather as symbolic of a tradition, and the tradition is intriguing.

Sometimes Zarathustra (with apologies to Akhenaten) is referred to as the world's first monotheist, but his doctrine was dualistic rather than purely monotheistic. His god was Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, Creator of the World. Zarathustra's prophetic character and the insistence on ethical values puts him firmly in the Axial Age, which the period from 800 - 200 BCE is often termed. In all the main regions of the civilized world new ideologies were being created, and new religious systems developed during this period. A greater prosperity and novel technologies brought about by the increasing use of iron led to power shifting



from king and priest to the market place. This new wealth, in a greater proportion of the population, led to an enhanced individual consciousness, where inequality and exploitation became far more apparent and challenged (It has been contended that the idea of a universal God developed in a market economy in the spirit of aggressive capitalism!).

Our main information about early Zoroastrianism (as the religion instigated by Zarathustra was and is known) is contained in the *Avestas*, but these were not written down until rather later (the early Persians had an aversion to writing as they believed that it encapsulated evil!). For many generations after Zarathustra apparently lived the texts would have been transmitted orally.

The winged symbol associated with Zoroastrianism has its origins in an older symbol without a human figure going back to both Egypt and Mesopotamia over 4,000 years ago. The symbol represents divine power. These representations are actually later than Zarathustra and more relevant to the Persian Achaemenid Empire.

Prior to Zarathustra, ancient Iranian religion was dominated by a large pantheon of Aryan gods similar to the gods of Vedic India. But, unlike the gods of their Middle Eastern neighbours, these Aryan gods had their origins in abstract notions such as truth, virtue, and justice, rather than natural elements, and it was these abstractions that became divinized. The oldest of the *Avestas* are known as the *Gathas*, and it is from these that the origins of Zarathustra's religion and his deity, Ahura Mazda, have been established. The essence of this belief is that Ahura Mazda encapsulates the forces of Order (truth, virtue and justice) which must overcome the Lie (darkness, sickness and death).

This is Zarathustra's dualism, Order and the Lie. Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Life, Wisdom and Light was elevated above, and then replaced, all other ancient Iranian gods. No longer a tribal god like the Mesopotamian gods, but the universal and omnipotent god. But unlike Akhenaten's Aten, Ahura Mazda was the god of the people; his intercession was with the people, not through one exalted king. In this respect he anticipates Yahweh, the universal god of the Hebrews. This universalism was Zarathustra's revolution as, up to that point, gods invariably functioned as the gods of cities or tribes or kings; even Akhenaten's Aten could only be accessed through the Pharaoh, albeit possibly some 500 years earlier.

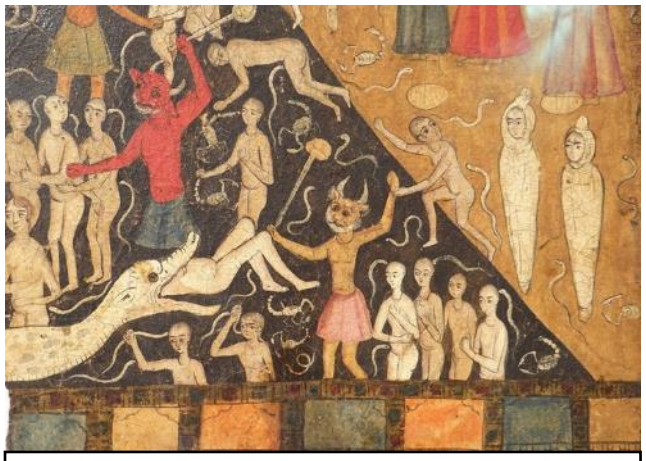
Zarathustra's fundamental message was belief in Order and overcoming the 'Lie'. The individual, through his own free will, could choose which way – Order or Lie. This appears to be the first time in human thought that humankind's free will is acknowledged, a concept of course which was so important to the early Christians. The opposite force to Ahura Mazda was Angra Mainyu (later Ahriman), the evil spirit, the Lie, who inhabited a realm of darkness as opposed to Ahura Mazda's sky and light.

Again there are no contemporary portrayals of Angra Mainyu, but there are plenty of later representations, usually showing a terrible, frightening, evil figure like this one.

But Zarathustra taught that the evil spirit would be undone at the end of time, when truth, virtue and justice alone would prevail. Although this was not really a new concept in religion, a sequence of creation, fall, and redemption appears in both Mesopotamia and Egypt, it was the first time that it was so explicitly expressed as culminating in the eternal victory of good over evil.

Zarathustra contended that on death the soul would leave the body and journey to a great bridge crossing to the other world. At the bridge the soul would be judged, with the righteous to heaven and the wicked to the abyss. This was similar, and later, to the Egyptian concept of the judgement of the dead by Osiris. However, Zarathustra takes things much further by arguing that the sole purpose of

human existence was to be victorious over evil. He maintained that evil was not a created force but a necessary corollary to good, that good cannot exist without evil (hence Angra Mainya) – they were constantly opposing spiritual forces. In some interpretations 'evil' is represented by Angra Mainyu and 'good' by Spenta Mainyu as two distinct manifestations of Ahura Mazda, combining the spiritual embodiment of both Truth and Falsehood. Perhaps this is getting a bit too esoteric, but we can certainly detect an evolutionary process here as these philosophies evolve through Judaism into Christianity.



A Zoroastrian conception of the final judgement, again a later representation.

With Ahura Mazda, Zarathustra also formulated abstractions known as 'Entities' or 'Bounteous Immortals', the upholders of Truth and Order, sometimes termed archangels, against the demonic forces of the Lie and Disorder. Ahura Mazda was said to have brought into the world the six 'divine evocations', wisdom, truth, power, love, unity and immortality. These are the six features that make up the essence of Ahura Mazda. It is contended that these six 'divine evocations' originally represented ancient Aryan abstract deities, and were introduced into Zoroastrianism to maintain some form of continuity with the old ways.

In all probability Zarathustra did not invent a new religion but reformed, and perhaps simplified, pre-existing religious practices, infusing them with a more sophisticated philosophical theology, with a greater emphasis on morality and justice. The dualism of Zarathustra was his attempt at solving the problem of evil, by acknowledging free will people were free to choose between good and evil.

In addition to concepts of good, evil and free will, features of Zoroastrianism include heaven and hell, divine judgement, angels, the devil, resurrection and above all a single creator god. These are all concepts which subsequently appeared in various forms in the so-called Abrahamic religions. Many of these appear to have been genuine early and original features of Zoroastrianism. In addition, it seems to have been the first religion to introduce the concept of a saviour of Mankind, Saoshyant, and the possibility of universal salvation. It was, perhaps, the first to move beyond cult to address moral and philosophical problems, laying the emphasis on personal choice and responsibility. Nietzsche had a point, since he maintained that Zarathustra was the first creator of the moral world. It is not difficult to see how these principals have impacted on Judaism, Greek rationality, Christianity and even Islam.

Zarathustra presented his god as the sole source of human morality – Ahura Mazda would judge every individual by their thoughts, words and deeds. A concept of heaven and hell was quite revolutionary in human thought. Up to this point it was generally accepted that an afterlife, if one existed at all, was a murky underworld for all but the most exalted in society, and morality played no part in how one experienced the afterlife. Was Zarathustra the first to give humanity a moral compass with visions of hell if we did not comply?

There are now only a few hundred thousand adherents to Zoroastrianism, mostly Parsis living in the Punjab region of India, but the debt that the Abrahamic religions owe to this ancient religion is gradually becoming recognised.

It is clear that there were fundamental changes in philosophical and religious outlook during this so-called Axial Age. In India, in China, in Greece and, of course, in a singular manner with the Hebrews, for whom a great crisis brought in a different revolution. The god who emerged from the

Hebrew Babylonian Exile was not the pure animating spirit of Zarathustra, or the abstract deity of Akhenaten, nor the formless universal substance of the Greek philosophers, but a solitary god with no human form but who made humans in his image, an eternal indivisible god, who exhibited the full range of human emotions, but a god who was long in the gestation. How the Hebrews arrived at this concept and whether Zarathustra had anything to do with it I will look at in my next article.

Neil Meldrum

Weblink Highlights October 2021

A longer list of weblinks this month to occupy the long dark evenings! The item on the UK's oldest carnivorous dinosaur is another discovery from museum collections. We know that most, if not all, museums are struggling for storage space for those items not on display. This, together with the ever evolving technology allowing re-examination and interpretation of existing artefacts, does pose the question of how many more 'new' discoveries are hidden away in these collections?

The item about humanity's deep past is different to most other items in that it is synopsis by the authors David Graeber and David Wengrow of their new book, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity.* It is well worth the read both for itself and to see if you want to buy the book. It seems that the story of humanity's distant past is ever changing as new discoveries reveal yet another change to long held ideas, or uncover previously unknown branches of the Homo 'tree'. For the interested but non-specialist observer it can be difficult to keep track of the latest theories. This is especially the case given the TV repeats, which don't always announce the fact that they were made 10 or more years ago. It would be useful if any factual programme included the production date at the start, and did not make you wade through the endless credits to find it on the very last line.

Alan Dedden

October Weblinks

Roman Road Found In Colchester Under Threat here

Residents Help Excavate Pen Dinas Hillfort here

Scientists Solve Mystery Of Etruscans' Origins here

New Dinosaur Species Found On Isle Of Wight here

Pensioner Charged With Conspiring To Convert £1m Viking Hoard here

2,700 Year-Old Toilet Found In Jerusalem here

UK's Oldest Carnivorous Dinosaur Found In Natural History Museum Collection here

Historic England To Offer Virtual Flights Over Ancient Landscapes here

LiDAR Reveals Unknown Sites On NT Estate In Northumberland here

Iron Age Diet Included Blue Cheese And Beer here

Skeleton Buried On Herculaneum Beach Discovered In First Dig For Three Decades here

Scottish Built 1874 US Cutter Bear Found Off Canadian Coast here

Diver Finds Crusader Sword In Cove Near Haifa here

A New Look At Humanity's Deep Past here

Garden Sphinx Statues Fetch £195,000 At Auction here

Solar Storm Confirms Vikings Settled North America Exactly 1,000 Years Ago here

Saqqara Mummy Shows Use Of Techniques 1,000 Years Earlier Than Expected here

Living With The World's Oldest Mummies here

The Indonesian Cave Containing The Oldest Animal Art here

New Dig At Culloden Battlefield Announced here

'Rare Find' At Richborough Amphitheatre Dig here

'Astounding' Roman Statues Found During Excavation Of Stoke Mandeville Norman Church here

Human Species From 500,000 Years Ago Given Name here

Vast Mosaic Restored At Jericho Desert Castle here

Mayan Canoe From Around 900 AD Found In Southern Mexico here

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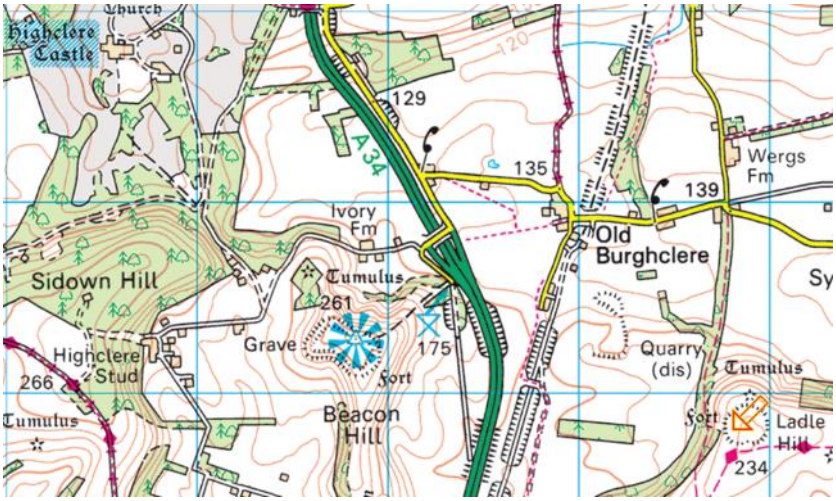
View from Above No 39: Ladle Hill, Hampshire

Photo from CBA Wessex quiz, December 2020: taken April 2008 from the north.

Ladle Hill is in the north of Hampshire, not far south of Newbury, but it caught my eye because of its unusual nature and, of course, from the reference to our esteemed Lilian. It's one of the two hillforts you can see on the spurs as you emerge from between the hills going north on the A34, not far short of Highclere Castle (or 'Downton Abbey'!).



I've often thought, as we drove north, that we should stop for a walk to one of these, probably Beacon Hill on the left as it's bigger and more prominent; of course, we never have. We'd have been interested in Highclere Castle too, but not in having the Downton links thrust at us. I'd forgotten that Highclere is the home of the Carnarvons (currently the 8th Earl), including the 5th Earl who financed Howard Carter in the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. He died in 1923 of blood poisoning and pneumonia, after a severe mosquito bite became infected from a razor cut (or was it the 'Mummy's Curse'?!). He is buried in the Beacon Hill hillfort.

This is a univallate hillfort intended to enclose about 3.5ha (8.6 acres), but it was never finished (it's also an SSSI). The west side of the fort picks up a Bronze Age boundary ditch running along the edge of the

scarp, a so-called 'Wessex Linear', and there's a very clear, well-preserved, disc barrow outside the fort to the north, 43m in diameter (though the central depression suggests antiquarian excavation). There's also a much smaller saucer barrow within the fort, though it's very hard to see. I couldn't discover anything about the circular feature to the south-east but there is a large earthwork on the steep western slope (not visible), probably a catchment pond and possibly of Roman date.

Dr. J P Williams-Freeman was the doyenne of Hampshire archaeology a century ago and thought that the dumps of material within the 'camp', much clearer on the photograph here, were the remains of early 19th century farmers' efforts to flatten the site for agriculture. However, Stuart Piggott and O G S Crawford used aerial photography to conclude that it was a hillfort that had never been completed. Piggott's paper in the 1931 (December) issue of *Antiquity* gave a detailed description, the start of a greater understanding of hillfort construction methods. In particular, and seen in other types of enclosure, it appears that separate 'work crews' worked on different parts, with the whole eventually linked up.

The site has never been excavated, so close dating isn't possible. What appear to be the remains of palisades between the ditch segments might suggest a previous enclosure, though they might also be the remains of the initial marking out of the site. It does, though, appear that any enclosure was never inhabited as there are no features in the interior, such as the remains of pits or round houses. A magnetometer survey in 1997 also showed none of the variations seen on settlement sites on the chalk. The saucer barrow is visible on this photograph if you view it at a larger scale: straight across the ditch from the disc barrow and about the same distance the other side.

This is by no means the only unfinished hillfort – for example Mistleberry, to the north of Sixpenny Handley and just in Wiltshire, which may have been abandoned as the siting is poor. Ladle Hill is, though, probably the best known, though there is nothing to tell us why the work was abandoned.

Geoff Taylor

EDAS PROGRAMME

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

2021			
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	**Dr Jim Leary**	The Vale of Pewsey Project - Marden Henge and Cat's Brain Long Barrow

DISTRICT DIARY

Things have 'opened up' a little, with welcome lectures by the Blandford Museum Group and in planning for AVAS (*Zoom* until February; speakers tbd). There's nothing new since last month, but I imagine more will appear in the near future unless circumstances change.

Do let me know of anything you know or hear about.

2021			
Wed 3rd November	Who Are We and Where Do We Come From? Our origins through ancient DNA	**AVAS**	Zoom lecture by Francis Taylor
Thur 18th November	The long bow and the Mary Rose	**Blandford Group**	Abigail Parkes, Southampton University
2022			
Thur 20th January	Mycenaen harbours	**Blandford Group**	Max Macdonald, Southampton University
Thur 17th February	Schooners: design and people in the 18th century	**Blandford Group**	Jack Pink, Southampton University
Thur 17th March	The Roman town house: Dorchester's hidden gem	**Blandford Group**	Steve Wallis
Thur 21st April	Iron Age Excavation at Blandford	**Blandford Group**	Dan Carter/Peter Cox, AC Archaeology
Thurs 19th May	Underfloor excavations at Avebury Manor	**Blandford Group**	Briony Clifton, Avebury National Trust

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:
  https://blandfordtownmuseum.org.uk/groups/archaeology-group-revised/
  Meetings normally 7:30pm 3rd Thursday of each month September to May at the Tabernacle. Visitors £3; 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.