East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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NEWSLETTER – April 2022

Editor's Notes

As I said last month, I was away until a couple of days ago, so my apologies if doing this newsletter more quickly than usual means there's a few more errors.

This month's lecture in St Catherine's Hall was, of course, announced last month and in a recent circular from Andrew. A reminder, assuming you have time to read this before Wednesday evening, that the lecture is by renowned expert Denise Allen on *Roman Glass*. That's 6th April at 7:30 – early this month because of other events in the hall on our usual night.

You'll find a summary of last month's **Annual General Meeting 9th March 2022** below. First, though, there's Vanessa's summary of the talks that followed the meeting: **EDAS Excavation at Wimborne All Hallows**. This is rather longer than the usual write-up of our lectures, as befits both its importance and the wish to record as many of those involved as possible, so the second in the new *From the Archives* series will have to wait.

I started a possible series called *Did You Know?* last month, intended to look at lesser known facts about the history and archaeology of Dorset, or perhaps of the whole of Wessex. Since no one sent me anything, this will just have to be intermittent short paragraphs or articles if, and when, contributions arrive. Other 'series' do continue, with my thanks to those providing them:

- Alan's second follow-up to Leonard Baker's lecture on the history of Cranborne Chase: '**The Most Riotous, Unprincipled Men' - The spectre of change on Cranborne Chase**. It seems that only Peter Walker spotted my 'deliberate' error in the first follow-up of putting someone called James IV early in the 17th century when it was, of course, King James I.
- The 14th of Neil Meldrum's articles: **China enters history: the Shang Dynasty.**
- A further set of information in Alan's **Weblinks** and **Highlights.**
- View from Above 44: **White Sheet Hill, Wiltshire.**

There are also a number of smaller items, some for events happening soon.

Geoff Taylor

EDAS Excavation, Wimborne All Hallows – Lecture by Alan Dedden, Andrew Morgan, Ian Drummond and Vanessa Joseph.

During autumn 2020 and summer 2021, EDAS carried out an archaeological excavation at Wimborne All Hallows on behalf of Wimborne St Giles Parochial Church Council (PCC). The project was initiated when Peter Shand, a member of the public, came across the overgrown graveyard of Wimborne All Hallows having learnt about the site from *The Dorset Rambler* – an online publication by Terry Yarrow. Peter was inspired by the site's special qualities and volunteered his services to the PCC to clear the overgrowth. Although his offer was eagerly accepted, he was asked to contact a local historical society to investigate the history of the site and to locate the remains of the church, which had been systematically demolished in the early 18th century.

Peter Shand next to one of the ancient pre-Christian yew trees.

Members of the EDAS committee assessed the requirements and agreed to run a community project on behalf of the PCC. With the Covid pandemic in full swing in 2020, the project was devised to involve a limited number of EDAS members on-site but also offer opportunities for desk research. The project objectives were to locate and define the footprint of the church; assess the structure of the building in terms of construction, phasing and dating; locate and record the graves; create a map of the site featuring all monuments and structural components such as boundary wall, yew trees and entrance; research the history of the church and its relationship with other churches in the area; and to research the historical record about the families buried on the site.

The site had been cleared on an irregular basis in the past and was revered locally for its annual display of snowdrops. The graveyard is consecrated and has never been closed by the church. The PCC accepted a 'controlled and limited archaeological investigation' with a few caveats, namely: to avoid all graves and respect any human remains, to leave as found and to adhere to Covid regulations.

Historical context

Wimborne All Hallows is located in the chalklands of Cranborne Chase just north of Wimborne St Giles. The church was in a prime position, on a spur of land overlooking the River Allen. The site was defined by ancient yew trees and a nearby chalk spring, a source of clean water.

The church is mentioned in the Domesday Book (which also refers to a settlement or farm named Opewinburne or Obpe Winborna) and in the *Taxatio Ecclesiasticus* (as Wymborn Carentam) in 1291. It was the principal church in the area. The rectory of Wymborn was divided, with half being given to the Abbess of the Convent of Tarent. During the Dissolution this was passed to the Crown. In the 17th century, Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, 1st Earl of Shaftesbury, built a new country house close to Wimborne St Giles. In 1732, the 4th Earl of Shaftesbury consolidated the All Hallows rectory with that at Wimborne St Giles. Shortly afterwards, the church at Wimborne All Hallows was demolished, leaving the graveyard and the church platform.

John Hutchins (1774) said: "In 1291 the church of Winburn Karentham seems to have been the mother church … It was *of mean fabric* and on its union with Winburn St Giles, 1733, was neglected and pulled down. Here formerly were three bells."

With little room at Wimborne St Giles, the All Hallows churchyard continued to be used for burials up to the beginning of the 20th century. The majority of known burials are from the 19th century, but a small

number of grave slabs have been uncovered dating from the 17th century and early 18th century, predating the demolition of the church.

Site survey

It is estimated that, between the 12th century and 1925, approximately 1400 people were buried at Wimborne All Hallows. Between lockdowns in 2020, Alan Dedden coordinated the site survey. A few EDAS members surveyed the graveyard, recording and photographing all grave markers and inscriptions, noting features of the site, measuring the girth of the yew trees, and collecting surface finds.

Matthew draws a scale plan of the site on three A3 sheets

Volunteers carefully removed ivy and lichen and noted the size, shape and condition of grave markers, as well as orientation of the inscription. Probes were used (max. 300mm) for fallen headstones or other grave markers. Styles varied from slabs to simple headstones to a few crosses on pedestals. The most impressive monument was that of Henry and Harriet Lowry-Corry (Harriet was the daughter of the 6th Earl of Shaftesbury), and the most notable and complex grave marker was the Talbot family tomb. The latter memorialised Charles Talbot, Rector of St Giles and Dean of Salisbury, cousin to the 5th Earl of Shaftesbury (1769-1823); his wife Elizabeth, eldest daughter of the Duke of Beaufort (1772-1836) and 15 children.

Alan and David probing for lost grave markers, with the Lowry-Corry monument beyond.

Geoff uses flour to reveal inscriptions

Archaeological fieldwork

Resistivity and magnetometry surveys had been done by Dave Stewart and Paul Cheetham in 2013. They were used, together with a study of the terrain, to set out the trenches. For two weeks in October and November 2020, EDAS carried out limited excavations to locate the building remains. Numbers were restricted to 6 volunteers a day due to Covid restrictions, and government guidance was strictly followed. Parts of the east, west and south walls were discovered.

Ian, Sue and Matthew excavating the south wall

In 2021, when lockdowns eased, EDAS invited more volunteers to join the excavation for 5 weeks in July and August. 21 people signed up, several with no previous experience, and there were around 10 volunteers per day. Three trenches were opened over the locations of the 2020 trenches with the aim of exposing more of the walls. We set out grids using the same markers as in 2020, and cleared back the trenches by trowelling. As the archaeology was very close to the surface, we probed with a metal rod in selected locations to ascertain if there were further areas worthy of investigation. As a result, 4 more trenches were opened later on.

Ian Drummond coordinated the fieldwork. Excavation records included the following registers: context, drawing, photographs, special finds and levels. Plans were drawn at 1:20 and sections at 1:10. In 2020,

levels were taken with a Dumpy, but in 2021 we borrowed a Leica Flexline TS06 from the New Forest National Park Authority Community Archaeology Team. This sophisticated equipment gave co-ordinates as well as levels, and saved data points to be downloaded into a GIS system for further analysis by Ian.


Ian calibrating the Leica Flexline TS06

Just like Time Team, we had a deadline. To everyone's delight, the church footprint was revealed, exposing lengths of the west, south and east walls including three corners. We found the tower on the final day of the dig! At the end of the excavation, some of us backfilled the site using shovels and wheelbarrows, and replanted snowdrop bulbs that Heather and others had collected.


Viv and Maryanne tidying the site for the Open Day


Heather writing context sheets


Jan and Sara sorting finds trays

Post-excavation

Finds include decorated floor tiles, glazed ridge tiles, iron objects, lead objects, pottery and window glass. An initial assessment of the pottery sherds shows a mixture of medieval, Victorian and the ubiquitous Verwood. Thanks to Cecily Cropper, we know we have a few pieces of medieval glass dated to the 12th and 13th centuries.


Diana Hall and John Winterbottom have identified the decorated floor tiles as Wessex style, dating from the late-13th to mid-14th centuries

Some oyster shells have been found. Historic records tell that the Victorians had a very peculiar tradition of picnicking in cemeteries. Perhaps these were eaten by people who came to visit their dead relatives and socialised with others who were also visiting their loved ones?

A mixture of human bones and animal bones which ended up in finds trays is currently being assessed. All human bones will be reburied at All Hallows graveyard.

A few internal wall plaster fragments show signs of possible wall inscriptions or figurative painting. A piece with church graffiti is possibly associated with Marian devotion or warding off evil spirits.

Thanks to Karen Brown, two silver medieval coins were found. Dr Martin Allen of the Fitzwilliam Museum has identified one as a William I cut silver half penny from the Wareham mint, 1083-1086 (shown here). The other, a Henry III long cross quarter silver penny, was produced between 1247-72.

The find of the dig

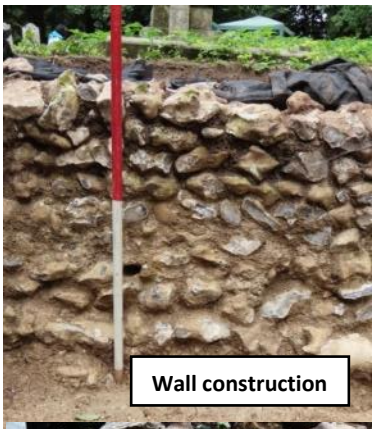
The most exciting (and unexpected) find was a medieval cross slab, which I discovered not far from the south wall of the nave. Measuring 2.12m long, and 0.39m wide at the top tapering to 0.29m, it is a very impressive monument.

Traditionally, the area to the south of a church was a favoured location for important burials. Analysis of the cross slab by Moira and Bruce Gittos indicates a high status 13th century burial. The slab has a relief cross with large trefoil terminals – possibly a flower head motif in the middle – and a rare, moulded base instead of the expected stepped Calvary. The double hollow chamfered edges are a trademark feature of Purbeck marble slab carvers, and Trev Haysom has identified the stone as Purbeck marble. This find is important, not only for the unusual points of detail in its carving but also for its completeness and state of preservation. The slab has been reburied.


Vanessa with the cross slab

Preliminary conclusions

The church at Wimborne All Hallows was a simple two-celled building of flint nodules and greensand ashlar. It is typical of Cranborne Chase churches. The roof was constructed of ceramic and limestone roof tiles. Fragments of glazed ridge tiles in red, greens and amber indicate that the exterior was decorated in an attractive style.


Wall construction

A glazed ridge tile

Walls comprised rows of prepared flint nodules laid on a foundation of chalk with flint flakes. Occasionally, greensand, heathstone and local conglomerate blocks were used. The greensand ashlar cornerstones were dressed. Evidence of external render was found on the west and north walls. Some good examples of in-situ internal wall plaster were also found, particularly in the southwest and southeast corners of the chancel.


Dressed cornerstones

In-situ wall plaster

Archaeological evidence and the historical record suggest the church was built mid-13th century (tbc). There is no evidence of an earlier structure or that the nave and chancel were extended. A substantial tower was constructed on the north side, likely late-14th to early-15th century (tbc). Any bells were likely to have been hung from a bell cote.

Other pieces of medieval cross slabs and fragments of Purbeck marble, badly weathered or reused, suggest that there was more than one high status burial at Wimborne All Hallows, and that the graveyard was the chosen burial place for people of wealth from the 13th century.

The evidence of medieval floor tiles and window glass, Purbeck marble coffins and a tower, proves that the church benefitted from episodes of generous funding which continued into Victorian times.

We know that the church was systematically demolished in the 1730s. All useful building material was removed, leaving only discarded fragments. The only visible sign of the church having been there was a flat platform. However, the popularity of the location was recognised again in Victorian times, when members of wealthy families chose to be buried here. Again, the graveyard benefitted from substantial improvements.

Aerial view of the remains of All Hallows Church showing footprint and medieval grave slab to the south. The outline of a two-cell church with tower has been superimposed.

A community project

The All Hallows project is a perfect example of EDAS working in the community, encouraging an interest in local history through research and archaeological investigation.

During the dig, we spoke to many people as they walked their dogs or wandered past. Open Days in early August shared findings with the local community and other EDAS members. More than a hundred people visited the site and several families had guided tours.

Open Day at All Hallows

Next steps

When post-excavation work has been completed, we plan to hold a day school for the local community and also provide material for a site pamphlet. EDAS will prepare a paper for publication in the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Proceedings. The project archive of paper, digital and photographic records, and all the finds, will initially be offered to the church.

Thanks go to Martyn Cubitt, Church Warden and contact for the PCC, and to all the friends of EDAS who have offered advice and support. Thank you also to our volunteers and to Lindsey Dedden for supplying delicious cake!

Vanessa Joseph

Annual General Meeting 9th March 2022

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

Alan Dedden (Programme Secretary) retired by rotation, offered himself for re-election and was re-elected unanimously. Nick Ellis resigned from the committee during the year, so that there is a vacancy for which any interested person can apply. The committee members are listed below for information.

Andrew thanked all those who have helped to make the Society a continuing success, especially during the pandemic, not least the membership for their continued support. Particular mentions were for Lindsey Dedden and her team for refreshments at lectures and on-site, David Long as our accounts examiner and David Smith at Keeper's Lodge for a large kennel that is being adapted to store our equipment.

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

'The Most Riotous, Unprincipled Men' - The spectre of change on Cranborne Chase

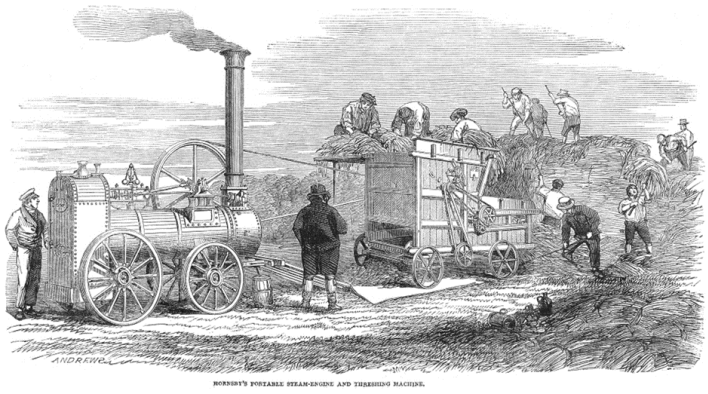
The years leading up to the events described by Leonard Baker in his talk to EDAS in December saw a decline in the value of the deer, and hence the reason to maintain Cranborne Chase as a hunting forest. The tenure of James I [not IV per previous article!] as Lord of the Chase did not last long; he sold it to William Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, in 1616. Then, in 1671, the 3rd Earl of Salisbury sold it to the Earl of Shaftesbury, but without Vernditch – starting the geographical decline of the Chase. A number of deer parks had been 'deparked' in the preceding century, including Alderholt, Blagdon and Breamore, which also reduced deer habitat as the former parks were put to other uses, such as agriculture.

The Earl of Shaftesbury sold the Lordship of the Chase to the Freke family in 1695, and from them it came down to Lord Rivers. As in previous centuries, the right to hunt on the Chase was rarely, if at all, exercised by these Lords, reflecting not only the declining value of venison, but also the decline in deer hunting generally and, through it, the status accruing to the Lord of the Chase. The decline in status probably resulted, at least in part, from the rising value, both financial and social, of owning estates in the ever expanding overseas territories, together with the move amongst many nobles to a more urban lifestyle. The attractions of city life for some were now greater than those of the country lifestyle.

As the benefits of holding the Lordship of the Chase waned, other factors began to increase the pressure on landowners to change their traditional farming practises as new ideas emerged. These new ways were inevitably at variance with the traditions of the Chase, which regarded agriculture as tolerable as long as it did not conflict with the life, wellbeing and hunting of the deer. Leonard Baker highlighted the reforms promoted by the noted 18th century agriculturalist John Billingsley, founder of the Bath and West Agricultural Society, who caused many landowners to rethink their ways of farming. More locally, Humphrey Sturt (1724-86) of Critchel Estate was keen to introduce new methods, and used steam power for threshing, introduced new crops and used

Crichel House as remodelled in the 1770s; the village of Moor Crichel was moved to create the lake, with many inhabitants resettled in Witchampton.

large quantities of manure. It is also said that the Earl of Shaftesbury acquired the Chase Lordship in 1671 so that he could depark Alderholt Walk and remove the deer which were damaging the young trees planted for timber on his extensive plantations; perhaps why the Shaftesburys held it for only 24 years.

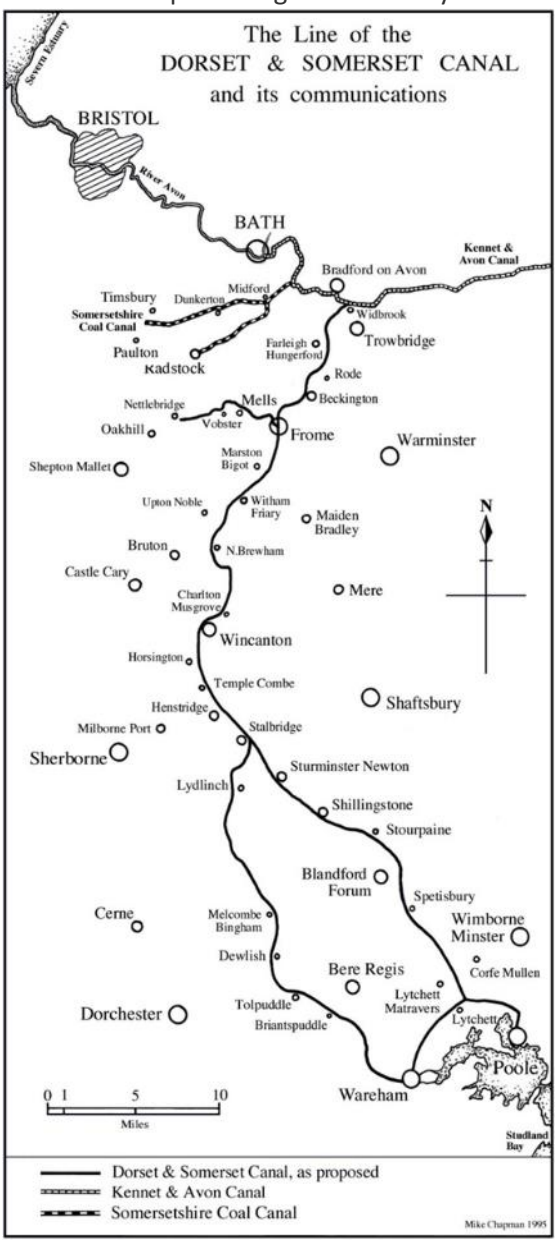


HORNSBY'S PORTABLE STEAM-ENGINE AND THRESHING MACHINE.

The importance of timber was another aspect arising from the growing overseas colonies and the need for an ever larger navy to protect them. The growing navy obviously created a demand for timber, and so landowners sought to profit from this. Some came from the royal forests, and this was the reason the Inclosures in the New Forest were first created in an Act of Parliament in 1698. The purpose of the Inclosures was to fell the mature trees and then replant and protect the new growth for 20 years before opening them again. In the New Forest, as with other hunting forests and chases, this conflicted with flourishing deer herds because they ate young trees but were now kept away from them. Estimates vary for the number of trees required to build a ship of the line from the high hundreds to 6,000. It was also known that as much as half of the timber felled for ship building made its way back out of the dockyards and into local homes for fires, furniture or house structure.

The invention of a practical steam engine in the 18th century by, amongst others, Thomas Newcomen and James Watt heralded the start of the Industrial Revolution, bringing many benefits but also disadvantages. The increasing use of machinery on farms, as at the Crichel Estate, reduced the demand for agricultural workers and also suppressed their wages. In rural Dorset this was compounded by the lack of any associated industry to which they could turn.

In many ways, the canals were the arteries of the Industrial Revolution, carrying materials to the industrial centres and finished products to the cities, but here again Dorset saw no benefit. In 1792 a canal linking Bristol and Poole was proposed, and the necessary act of Parliament received Royal Assent in 1796. The route linked the Kennet and Avon canal at Bradford-on-Avon , through Frome, Wincanton, Stalbridge, Sturminster Newton, Shillingstone, Blandford and Wimborne to Poole, with a branch to the Mendip collieries in Somerset. The investors anticipated a regular traffic in coal from Bristol and the Somerset coalfields to Dorset and, in the opposite direction, Purbeck clay destined for the Staffordshire potteries. Other anticipated cargoes included freestone and lime from Somerset and timber, slate and wool from Dorset.



However, Lord Rivers had objected to the southern end beyond Blandford, so the approved route stopped just beyond Shillingstone, which would have negated many of the intended cargos. In any case, the scheme soon ran into financial problems and, although work had started and 8 miles were completed on the Somerset

branch, work stopped in 1803 never to resume. The Portland and Purbeck quarries continued to flourish because they had no need of canals, as the main quarries were located on the coast and stone was loaded directly onto ships.

The wool trade had brought prosperity to many areas of the country and, in earlier centuries, Dorset had also benefitted, but in the 17th century the trade fell into decline; one of the results was a series of Acts of Parliament starting in 1666, requiring all burials to be 'in woollen'.

All of these different pressures eventually caused the major landowners of the Chase to come together with the aim of disenfranchising the Chase. The landowners included the Earl of Buckingham, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Lord Arundell of Wardour, and Anthony Chapman, who was appointed secretary; they formed the Proprietors, meeting in 1786 at the Woodyates Inn. Although the main area of disagreement was the financial compensation to be paid to Lord Rivers, the Proprietors based their arguments on moral grounds, and in their open letter to Lord Rivers published in 1791 they stated:

> *The Chase had been for years a nursery for and temptation to profligacy of all kinds of vice, profligacy and immorality; whole parishes in and adjacent to it were but nests of deer-stealers, bred to it by their parents; and initiating their children in it, they naturally contract habits of idleness and become pests of society! It is likewise a great harbour for smugglers, the woods being very commodious for secreting their goods, and the deer stealers always at hand to give them assistance.*

As Leonard Baker highlighted in his talk, the Proprietors were not too wide of the mark in some respects with their accusations (Isaac Gulliver – married in Handley church – was in his prime at this time), and it is interesting that they chose this line rather than argue the benefits of improved farming methods. Their initial offer of £200 compensation was based on their assessment of his loss, but this was rejected by Lord Rivers, who countered with a demand for £1,000 based on the increased benefit to the Proprietors!

Another area of disagreement was the inclusion of Wiltshire in the disenfranchisement, harking back to the disputes over the Chase boundaries in medieval times. The Proprietors held that Wiltshire had never been part of the Chase and, while the financial debate went back and forth, the boundary dispute led to a seemingly trivial case resulting in far reaching consequences in 1816. Thomas King of Norrington Farm at Alvediston was walking his dogs when a keeper shot one of them, saying he did not have Lord Rivers' permission to exercise his greyhounds on the Chase. This prompted King to provoke a test case and, on 12th January 1814, he set his dogs to chase off a group of deer he found on his farm. Lord Rivers was not about to ignore this affront and started a prosecution which came before Mr Justice Holroyd at the Salisbury Lent assizes in 1816. The defence argued that the Chase had never extended into Wiltshire as far as Alvediston, whilst the prosecution argued that periods of royal ownership had endowed the Chase with the status of a forest and the accompanying legal protections of 'vert and vernery' (venison and the greenery that supported it). The jury found for King on the basis that Lord Rivers had full rights *within the inner bounds*, but not the outer bounds which included Alvediston and most of the Wiltshire Chase lands. This swung the financial case back towards the Proprietors, as most of their lands were in the outer bounds. Handley, however, was definitely in the inner bounds and the population there had no benefit from any of the changes discussed and could only see their special 'otherness' being eroded. The events around Handley described by Leonard Baker started just 2 years later in 1818 with the Court Day Riots.

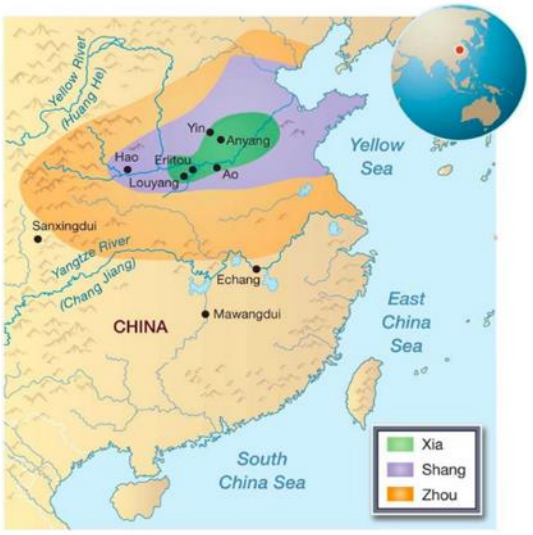
To be continued…

Alan Dedden

The April edition of Cranborne Chase AONB's newsletter, 'The Hart', can be found here. This month's edition is mostly focussed on the natural aspects of the Chase, rather than its history. There is a reminder, following my earlier note and Andrew's message to the members, of the 'Hands on Heritage' days at Cranborne Ancient Technology Centre on **9th and 10th April**.

China enters history: the Shang Dynasty

With the advent of the Shang dynasty (1600-1046 BCE), Ancient China makes the transition from semi-myth to history. Erligang, about 70 miles downstream along the Yellow River from the presumed Xia capital, Erlitou, was the centre of early Shang culture. There may have been up to 18 rulers between Cheng Tang, the first Shang ruler, and Pan Geng *c*.1300 BCE, when Shang history definitely emerges from the shadows. It is probable that this early Shang period saw a number of successive capital cities. Although this period is still not clearly understood, the Shang king Pan Geng is an undisputed historical figure, as are the 11 kings who followed him. Pan Geng moved the Shang capital to Yin Xu, near the modern city of Anyang, where it remained for the rest of the Shang period. The best known Shang king is Wu Ding (1250-1192 BCE), who seems to have been particularly concerned with courting the goodwill of his ancestral spirits. With the apparent help of his ancestors, Wu Ding was a great military leader and statesman, who took the Shang state to its greatest geographical extent and to the pinnacle of its power.



As so often happens after a long and glorious reign, after Wu Ding's death the Shang state started a period of slow decline. The last Shang king, Di Xin (1075-1046 BCE), apparently had a similarly obnoxious and evil character as the last Xia ruler, Jie, and seems to have suffered a similar fate at the hands of the Zhou, the succeeding dynasty. However, the victors write the history, so it seems likely that there was a good deal of self-justification in these stories.

Shang society was marked by ever sharper distinctions between commoners and the elite. As with most ancient societies, a study of Shang culture and religion is necessarily limited to the upper echelons of society. There is no way of knowing the commoners' beliefs with no written records; whatever folklore remains would have undergone too many changes over the centuries to be relied upon. However, in all probability, such beliefs would have been some form of a corrupted, simplified and popularised version of Shang elite culture, which revolved around the cult of the ancestors. If similar beliefs were held by the commoners, their ancestors would certainly not have had the power and prestige of the elite's ancestors, and were probably not even acknowledged by them.

Early in the dynasty's history the god, Shang-Di, an ancient sky god (or possibly a group of astral deities), was paramount and the king was the principal point of contact. But Shang-Di's significance waned over time as the elite ancestor cult became more firmly established. The king maintained his position at the apex of society, but became the main conduit to the ancestors rather than to Shang-Di. The king's authority was expressed through the performance of extensive and elaborate rituals, initially addressed to Shang-Di, but subsequently to the royal ancestors; the more remote the ancestor in time, the more important that ancestor was. Ritual, and the correct performance and conduct of ritual ceremonial, became imperative in Shang society, and it appears that this increasingly governed the lives of the king and the elite.

Shang kings and their nobility built huge and elaborate tombs. Unfortunately, their contents have almost all been plundered long ago, but such few remains that are left show that these tombs must have contained great wealth. And, as with the Egyptian tombs, the robbers did Chinese culture a service by allowing all the wealth that would have remained locked up to the detriment of society to continue to be used. A rather macabre feature of Shang elite tombs is the evidence of extensive human remains. Human sacrifice appears to have been commonplace in Shang society; victims were burnt at key ceremonial sites and buried within the foundations of various buildings. Further, it appears that Shang kings and the nobility would take all their household servants and retainers to the grave with them. In some of these tombs there is evidence of hundreds of people being buried in secondary graves. In most cases the bodies of these secondary burials were decapitated with the heads being buried elsewhere;

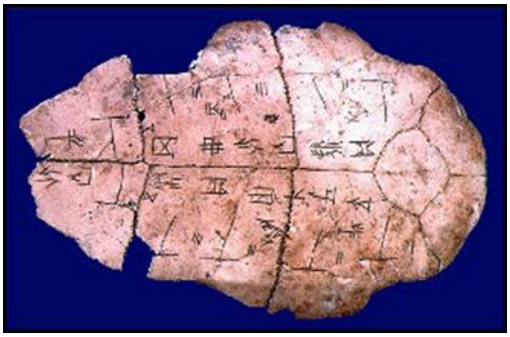
nobody is quite sure why. Clearly the king did not want to depart this world without his entourage, but whether that entourage went willingly or not remains a matter of how one interprets these ancient cultures; it seems unlikely to me that they joyfully joined their masters!

The Tomb of Fu Hao, a wife or concubine of Wu Ding, at Anyang, Henan Province – the only elite Shang tomb found so far which had not been looted.

Mass secondary burials in the tomb of a Shang Dynasty king in the museum at Yin Xu, Anyang – site of the later Shang capital.

Although there was probably a religious element to the ceremonial killings, it would appear that by the late Shang period there is very little evidence of any sacrificial aspect to these copious grave deaths. It seems that retainers were killed simply to assist or accompany their masters into the next world. Perhaps it is because of such practices that the perception grew that the world was peopled by vast numbers of untended spirits, with continual communication between the living and the dead. In ancient Chinese society, the dead were not deemed to be removed from the world of the living in the sense that they are (or were) in European societies.

Again perhaps because of the apparent continued presence of the dead, especially the royal ancestors, divination became important to the Shang. It was generally effected through the interpretation of 'oracle bones', with thousands discovered at various Shang sites, though by far the most numerous around Anyang, site of the later Shang capital Yin Xu and dating from *c*. 1250-1050 BCE. Most of these bones were the bottom shells of turtles; heat was applied causing them to crack with a popping sound. It is thought that interpretation was from the nature and the sound of the cracking, though nobody is really sure. What is certain is that these bones were used copiously by the king and the nobility, and that the interpretations from the ancestors, whatever they may have been, were taken very seriously indeed.



Much about Shang society and Shang beliefs has been discerned from these oracle bones because, as you can see, the divinations were written on the bones in an ancient Chinese script, writing that is clearly an antiquated form of the modern Chinese script. There doesn't appear to be evidence of Chinese writing much earlier than 1400 BCE, but certainly from about 1200 BCE onwards this writing became more and more prolific. This script is generally logographic, which means that symbols represent complete words, as opposed to our own alphabetic system where symbols represent sounds. Whether the idea of writing came from elsewhere is unknown, but the development of Chinese script is unique and doesn't appear to have been influenced from anywhere else. And because so many of these oracle bones have been so well preserved, this writing gives great insights into late Shang society.

The other characteristic of Shang society was their mastery of bronze casting, which has seldom been

surpassed anywhere in the world at any time. The casting of huge ornate bronze vessels and bells, with wonderful and elaborate decoration, was integral to the ancestor cult of the Shang. Unlike other Bronze Age cultures, the main artistry and skill in Shang bronze working appears to have been reserved for ceremonial purposes. Whilst bronze was certainly used for weapons and tools, the more ornately decorated weapons were clearly made for ritual purposes. We are fortunate that so many of these remarkable bronzes have survived. The casting of copper and tin to produce bronze had to be very carefully combined, and furnaces stocked and controlled to extremely high temperatures. All this would have required a most sophisticated, well-organised and skilled workforce operating in an artistic and structured environment. Certainly the artistic genius of the Shang was best expressed though this exquisite and elegant bronze working.

Unfortunately there are no great Shang stone edifices as in Ancient Egypt. Cities were mostly constructed in timber and very little remains, but it does appear that the common people mostly lived in subterranean dwellings. It was previously thought that this method of housing was evidence of the extremely low status of the common people. However, it now appears that this method of habitation had been customary for many thousands of years, and that it offers excellent protection against the heat in the summer and the cold of the winter. The nobility would have lived in timber constructed palaces, and excavation has revealed that these palaces were extensive, with a basic design that remained unchanged until Ming times 2,500 years later. As archaeological research intensifies throughout modern China, it is becoming increasingly apparent that there were other advanced cultures, especially to the south of the Shang. Although the Shang may have been politically dominant for a time, they weren't the only centre of Ancient Chinese culture. The slow advance of Shang, and later Zhou, society gradually expanded the cultural zone of the Han peoples, assimilating many neighbouring peoples and cultures into the growing Han civilization.

The excavated remains of a Shang period timber palace/ temple complex at Huanbei, across the river from Yin Xu. Covering about 100 acres, it appears to have been deliberately burnt down only 50 years after it was built. The bodies of at least 40 sacrificial victims were found there.

But, as with every other regime in history, the Shang suffered a decline – in what is a mirror image of the Shang coming to power over the Xia, they in turn were overwhelmed by an initially less cultured, but more vibrant, society. In 1047 BCE the Zhou, a tribal society inhabiting lands to the west of the Shang, defeated the Shang at the Battle of Muye and, according to their propaganda, won Heaven's approval because of the degeneracy of the Shang regime. But more of the Zhou, who established the longest running dynasty in Chinese history, and their Heavenly Mandate, in the next article.

Neil Meldrum

Weblink Highlights March 2022

The 'discovery' of dozens of royal graves across the west of England and Wales from the early medieval period is potentially an interesting insight into this period, but further reading perhaps casts a cautious shadow over this revelation. The identification relies not on recent archaeological work, but on analysis of previous discoveries and the similarity of the graves to known royal burials from the period. Whilst these similarities may, indeed, eventually be shown to be indicators of royal or near royal tombs, the author of the study, Professor Ken Dark, says more work is required before they can be generally accepted as such.

Stonehenge, not surprisingly, features quite regularly in news items of archaeological interest, and this month there are 2 more. The first from the speaker at the EDAS February meeting, Professor Tim Darvill, whose study published in *Antiquity* suggests Stonehenge was used as a solar calendar (I thought we already knew that? [ages ago – *ed*!]). His analysis is compelling, but I am left wondering how it was used, and who was it that kept track of where they were in the various solar cycles. As this design could only be based on many years of study of the solar calendar, and ongoing maintenance of the current position within it, it implies rather strongly that there was a community living long term at or near Stonehenge. However, the only evidence of such a community discovered so far is that at Durrington Walls, but we know that this related only to the short period of about 25 years of building the final phase of Stonehenge. So who were these timekeepers and where did they live?

The other Stonehenge item is that reporting the acquisition of land around Stonehenge by the National Trust – or so the various reports would have you believe. However this is not quite the case. The land has been owned by NT for decades, but let to tenant farmers. Julian Richards excavated at Coneybury in 1980 with their oversight. They have now closed the farms to protect the area from farming damage and will be returning the landscape to chalk grassland, which is wonderful news. Let's hope the farming carried out to date has not destroyed important archaeological evidence and that future investigations add to our knowledge of this internationally important landscape.

Alan Dedden

March Weblinks

Rare Anglo-Saxon Coin Found By Metal Detectorist here

Excavations At Berwick Hospital Site Discover Medieval Toilet here

Long-necked Dinosaurs Probably Had Even Longer Necks Than We Thought here

Doomed Ship Of Gold Ghostly Picture Gallery Found Largely Intact here

Tyrannosaurus Rex May Have Been 3 Species, Scientists Say here

Dinosaur With 'Puny Arms' and Hard Head Found In Argentina here

Prof Darvill Solves Stonehenge Mystery here

Possible Earliest Dinosaur Found In China here

Rare Pictish Symbol Stone Found During Archaeological Survey Of Aberlemno here

Roman Ship Sunk Off Mallorca 1,700 Years Ago Found After Storm Disturbed Sand here

Shackleton's Ship Endurance Found In Remarkable State Of Preservation here

Shaman's Drum Is Returned To The Sámi here

Ancient Tombs Discovered At Notre-Dame Cathedral During Restoration here

Final Resting Places Of Up To 65 Saxon Era British Kings Revealed here

National Trust Acquires Significant Land Near Stonehenge here

WW1 Shipwreck On Cornish Beach Exposed Following Storms here

Medieval Seal Found By Notts Schoolboy Metal Detectorist Reaches £4,000 At Auction here

2,500 Year Old Burial Found In Siberia's 'Valley Of The Kings' here

Bodies From The Dark Ages Found Under Edinburgh Car Park Were 'Well Connected' here

The CBA Wessex April newsletter is here, including a focus on Poole Museum and a link to the BM's *World of Stonehenge* exhibition. There's a 'link' to our very own *View from Above* with a new aerial photography resource from Historic England. Most importantly, our honorary member Martin Green features in a documentary about 'baffled archaeologists' and an apparently re-articulated skeleton.

As was previously announced to members, the Association for Roman Archaeology sometimes provide online talks for members and non-members. The next talk will be on **Thursday 7th April at 18:30**, when Mike Stone will speak about Ceramic Building Material: tiles, bricks and related material – much used in the construction of Roman buildings. Please use this link to register for the talk (and please consider giving a donation to ARA if you're not a member - see here).

Community Celebratory Pennant

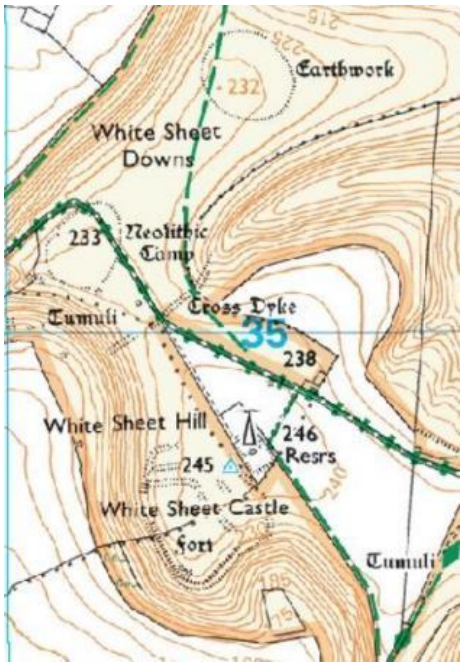
The Museum of East Dorset invited local community organisations to become a part of history and feature in its new exhibition: *East Dorset Celebrates: 70 years of Fun and Festivities*. A friend of EDAS has embroidered this double-sided pennant for the Society, to be displayed alongside all the other celebratory pennants in the new exhibition after Easter.

View from Above No. 44: White Sheet Hill, Wiltshire

Photo by Sue Newman and Jo Crane

This view from the south covers many of the ancient features on the hill, not far east of Stourhead and

also owned by the National Trust. There are panoramic views over Stourhead estate and the surrounding countryside from various points at the top. This is one of the most westerly area of downland in Britain, with a variety of floras and fauna, including orchids butterflies and birds.



The most obvious archaeological feature is 'White Sheet Castle' Iron Age hillfort in the centre, but other features are less clear unless you can enlarge the photograph. As can be seen on the Ordnance Survey map, the oblong mounds to the right of the Castle, are modern reservoirs, whilst the track running away from them passes through a Neolithic causewayed enclosure just beyond the light blue stretch (a flooded area?). The dark curve of the enclosure can just about be seen, more to the left than the right of the track where it almost touches a large barrow (marked on larger scale OS maps).

The National Trust date the causewayed enclosure to 3000 BC. Martin Green's book, *A Landscape Revealed*, puts it at 3780-3380; English Heritage agree that it is early Neolithic and date it to 3595-3550. The discontinuous ditches were unusually deep at about 4m (but now a tenth of that), and Martin's own research shows that the earthwork was built when the primeval woodland was cleared, allowing the people to herd cattle, sheep and pigs and to grow emmer wheat. The oval 'Earthwork' to the north-east is undated, but may relate to the causewayed enclosure, as may traces of a possible earlier ditch circuit under the hillfort.

The hill fort encloses about 5.75ha (14 acres) and is clearly univallate on the south and west, where the map shows the steepness of the slope. In fact, these sides are more a ledge with irregular ditch and no clear outer bank, though appearing as a large barrier from the outside and incorporating two round barrows. The more level approaches from north and east are protected by 3 banks and ditches, though the inner line is incomplete or has been slighted. The middle defences are complete and, like the inner ones, appear to have been built in 3 segments. There interruptions in the outer defences, which seem to have been built in 7 segments. Beyond that, dumps of material suggest that a 4th boundary may have been intended.

Although not visible, ridge and furrow cultivation is evident in the central enclosure, although house platforms up to 12m across remain at its edges. Unusually, the outer defences are widely spaced and evidence from the gaps suggests dense settlement.

The circular structure in the centre of the hillfort is of uncertain date and use. It is 24m in overall diameter and so well preserved that it could be fairly modern. It resembles a barrow but has not been confirmed as such, with suggestions that it contained a clump of trees or was the site of a beacon (though views to it are obscured by the hillfort rampart).

And Wikipedia says "The Roman road which runs along the hill was at one time the main route through the Selwood Forest", but gives no reference for the information. I found the same or a very similar statement on a couple of other sites but it's not clear what the source was. It is, as far as I can see, rubbish: the course of the Roman road west from Old Sarum is uncertain in this area but even the kindest interpretation puts it over 2 miles away. Wikipedia can be helpful but always best to check.

Geoff Taylor/Jo Crane

EDAS 2022 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.

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

Nothing new this month I'm afraid, but do let me know of anything you know or hear about.

Wed 20th April	Villains, Victims and Tragedies at Dorchester gaol	**Wareham Society**	Brian Bates
Thur 21st April	Iron Age Excavation at Blandford	**Blandford Group**	Dan Carter/Peter Cox, AC Archaeology
Wed 18th May	The Battle of Britain over Dorset	**Wareham Society**	John Smith
Thurs 19th May	Underfloor excavations at Avebury Manor	**Blandford Group**	Briony Clifton, Avebury National Trust
Wed 15th June	Dorset Shipwrecks and Maritime Archaeology	**Wareham Society**	Gordon Le Pard
Wed 16th Sept	Finding Nero (and other Roman Emperors), after AGM	**Wareham Society**	Miles Russell

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 Furzebrook Village Hall, BH20 5AR, normally 7:30pm 3rd Wednesday of each month except July & August. Visitors welcome for £3; membership £10 pa.