

YCCCART

Lockdown Special 2

Yatton Congresbury Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team

Newsletter June 2020

Chairman's chat

It seems a long time since we were out in the field surveying and then having a chat over coffee. Many thanks to all who have kept us informed and entertained in the last twelve weeks. Ferdi's '*Much Binding in the North Marsh*' may be coming to an end, but I am sure there will be a sequel - no pressure Ferdi! This 'Lockdown Special 2' newsletter is probably the last newsletter until the Autumn unless there is a sudden flood of articles that require urgent publication. Please email all articles to Janet or me - MSWord compatible text and separate image files please. May I also remind you to always send emails as blind when contacting the group, especially when forwarding responses. There have been emails from people unknown to the majority of us.

The 'virtual AGM' has confirmed all the officers and committee members re-elected and the GDPR changes agreed. My thanks to Janet for organising this AGM and to Pete W for keeping us financially solvent. In this strange lockdown Chris has still been researching local history; Vince has been finalising survey reports, checking old files (and publishing his recipes) and I have been producing some new YCCCART exhibition materials on the assumption normal life may return. In the meantime I have sent off some YCCCART exhibition materials to be displayed on the virtual 'Congresbury Fete'.

Please keep in contact, keep safe and we'll meet again soon.

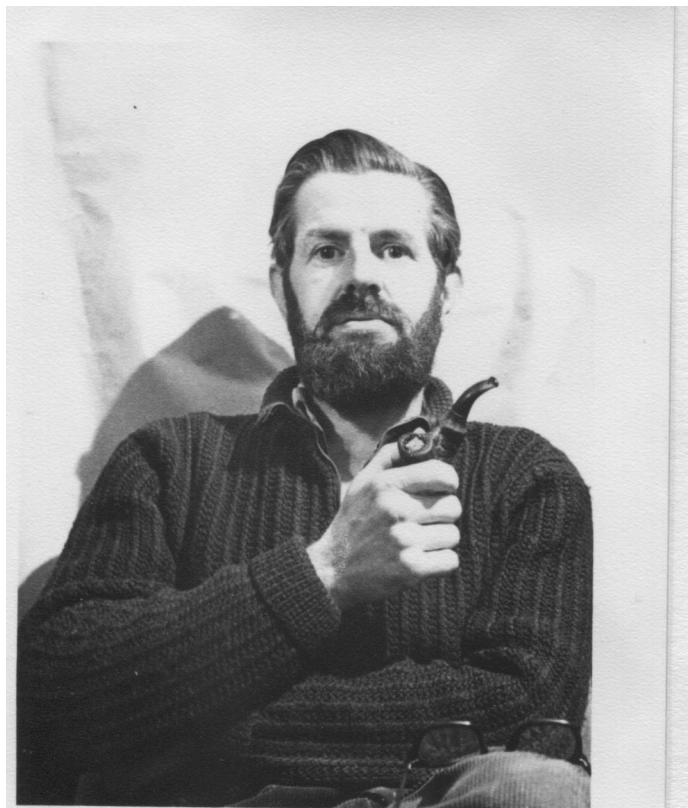
Arthur

Obituary - Derek Lilly

In his life Derek achieved many things. He had become an excellent pistol shot at the local gun club, he was an amateur breeder of tropical fish, an amateur archaeologist and one time chair with Clevedon & District Archaeological Society and also recorder with North Somerset Archaeological Research Group.

He was a long-time member of Clevedon Civic Societies History Group, editing the societies newsletters for many years. He was a very keen photographer and left a very impressive collection of the Clevedon area and especially Clevedon rugby club. He also became an expert in photographing plants and insects. He never went into anything half-hearted. Clevedon will miss him greatly.

David Long



Derek was a great help to YCCCART over the years. For example, he shared his knowledge of the Romano-British kiln site excavations in the 1960s at Venus Street, Congresbury. We will miss him

Chris Short

Bleadon Man

This is a reconstruction of the skull, dating from c150 BC, of an Iron Age farmer who lived in what is now the village of Bleadon.

His skeleton was excavated at Whitegates Farm in the late 1990s prior to the building of a new housing development and was one of two found lying in the characteristic foetal position.

Analysis of his remains suggests that he was around 1.70m tall and about 55 years old at the time of his death. He was a stocky individual who suffered from arthritis in old age and had endured frequent bouts of toothache. Examination of his jaw bone revealed worn teeth and evidence of many painful abscesses.

As can be seen from his profile he had a strong jaw, large nose and deep set eyes.

Analysis of the burial pits indicated that the staple arable crop grown by our farmer was wheat. Small fragments of animal bone were also analysed; these included cattle, sheep, horse and dog.

Isotope analysis carried out on the bones failed to find any trace of fish or marine creatures which suggests that Bleadon man was happy to stay close to his homestead and did not venture to the coast (even though it was only a few miles away) and that the area was capable of sustaining the settlement's needs.

The reconstruction of the skull was carried out by Caroline Wilkinson and was an episode on the TC programme Meet the Ancestors; you may well have seen it back in the day. DNA sampling of the villagers of Bleadon found 5 matches, one of whom, Guy Gibbs, looked remarkably like our Iron Age ancestor.

I asked Vince what he remembered about this important local find.

I was actually quoted in New Scientist ('yes, but this is the way science works!') for me, an ultimate accolade, from a piece to



camera that Andy Young and I did! We were filming a 'before the dig' and an 'after the dig' piece in the same day, and I suddenly realised that I couldn't be wearing the same shirt in both clips. Luckily, I was wearing a Mr Spock T-shirt underneath: I couldn't go anywhere for weeks without people saying 'Live Long and Prosper!' to me.

As a result of the science from the site being used at the opening of the Wellcome wing at the Science Museum in 2000, I met the Queen and Prince Philip, and to my surprise, found myself on the steering committee of the Ancient Biomolecules Initiative of NERC, because I was the only county archaeologist in the country with degrees in a biological science.we laid the foundation for the DNA and proteomics revolution that is currently sweeping through archaeology.

Janet



Not sure if I qualified for a full refund on this ticket.

Peter

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Postponed yet again folks!

Eastern Treasures

Loss of a potential holiday is not the most serious thing caused by the current coronavirus epidemic, but Jenny and I have a good reason to feel cheated. It was that other coronavirus, SARS, which caused us to abandon a two-week exploration of China in 2003 on our first morning in Beijing. We felt cheated to be sent home on the first available flight, without seeing all those wonderful sights we were familiar with from other peoples' journeying.

That it should happen again seems unkind. For years we had been talking of one day visiting the fabled city of Petra in Jordan and this year we parted with all the money required for a conducted, eight day tour with travel company Cox & Kings. With the Covid 19 outbreak, of course, we were forced to stay home. The only thing to do was to use the internet to glimpse what we had missed. It is surprising how much we could get from the many photographs and articles on line.



Our first three days were to be based in Amman (Philadelphia), with trips to the ruins of Gadara, just south of the Sea of Galilee and origin of the Gadarene swine) and Jerash, closer to Amman. Both were prominent towns in Greek empire days, later absorbed into the Roman province of Arabia. Both still have a colonnaded streets, temples and amphitheatres from Roman times.



The journey south to Petra was broken by visits to Madaba town, best renowned for its Byzantine era mosaics, in particular

a large illustrated map of the area, showing lands around the Dead Sea.



Also on the journey stops at Mount Nebo, rising to 2000 ft., traditionally where Moses first saw the promised land of Israel and the Crusader Castle at Shobak, before reaching our Hotel in the town of Petra, just east of the entrance to the narrow gorge in which the ruins of its ancient treasures lay un-noticed by the world for over a thousand years. Now one of the "modern Wonders of the World" visited by thousands, the pictures of Greek-columned and architraved palaces and temples cut from the rock faces of the gorge are stunning, despite all the crowds, though nothing we have seen on the internet explains what these ruins are like inside.



A day excursion further south to the area of Wadi Rum seems to be a must, into a magical country of high red stone cliffs and flat sand desert valleys not unlike the Monument Valley area of the Nevada Desert.

Our way home was into Israel, crossing the River Jordan at the Allenby bridge, upstream of its entry into the Dead Sea, with further visits to Jericho, Jerusalem, and optional outings to Masada and Bethlehem.

Knowing what we do now, we wish we had actually seen all these wonders!

Colin Campbell

Llamas

This is Winter, a four year old llama living in Belgium. Now she may not look the most attractive of creatures but she and her like could be the answer to our antibody prayers. Unlike Donald Trump's weird and wonderful medical pronouncements here's one which might actually work on the virus because her antibodies had already proven themselves able to fight Sars and Mers.



According to a recent study published in a scientific journal the antibodies in llama's blood could offer a defence against the coronavirus. Apparently along side larger antibodies, llama's have small ones that can sneak into spaces on viral proteins which are too tiny for human antibodies.

At the same time as I'm reading this interesting article in the Guardian I came across this beautiful statue of a llama. Mr MacGregor's book has been my go to read during lockdown.

This little beauty is only 6cm high and was made sometime between AD 1400-1550 by the Inca. It's hollow and was

constructed out of thin sheets of gold leaf. It's worth going on to the British Museum website to see the enlarged detail of the head; it's a very charming figure. These small statues of gold or silver are not uncommon and have been found all over Inca territory often buried as offerings.

So why was the llama so important to the Inca? Besides the obvious source of meat for food, manure for fertilising the soil and wool for clothing the llama is a doughty pack animal capable of carrying up to 30 kilograms of goods. A further advantage is that they are hardy and can cope with the altitude and cold of the high Andes.

As the Inca population grew new lands could be opened up thanks to the llama's ability to transport goods across the mountains. With all this expansion the Inca bred thousands of llamas as army pack animals. Following just one early battle with the Spanish 15,000 animals were abandoned. I think that it's safe to say that the llama was a fundamental part of Inca society.



Janet

FAIRYTALE LOCKDOWN ASSESSMENT: LITTLE RED RIDING-HOOD



TOM GAULD

New vocabulary for the Corona Era

Coronacoaster: The ups and downs of mood during the pandemic.

Quarantinis: Experimental cocktails mixed from whatever random items are left in the house.

Le Creuset Wrist: An aching arm after taking one's best pot outside to bang during the Clap for Frontline Workers.

Furlough Merlot: Wine drunk during the pandemic

Doughverkill: The consequence of eating the product of all that flour bought just before the shutdown.

Caught between and a hoard place: The dilemma of needing to purchase basics but not wanting to be accused of stockpiling.

The above were taken from an article written by Michael Hogan

Practical joke or toy? Leather 'mouse' shows Romans' playful side

Unique 2,000-year-old discovery made by staff in lockdown at Northumberland's Vindolanda Museum

The Roman author Pliny the Younger advised "kissing the hairy muzzle of a mouse" as a cure for the common cold. His fellow countrymen linked mice to the god Apollo, who could bring deadly plague upon them with his arrows.

So they might not have seen the funny side of a lifelike mouse made out of a strip of leather which has been newly discovered at the Roman fort of Vindolanda, south of Hadrian's Wall, near Hexham, Northumberland.

About the size of a real rodent and lying unnoticed until now among thousands of leather offcuts held by the Vindolanda Museum since 1993, it looks as if it had been squashed flat after being run over – perhaps by a Roman cart.



Barbara Birley, curator of the Vindolanda Museum, told the Observer: "It's a fabulous little piece. We weren't expecting to find something like that."

Whether it was a practical joke or a child's toy will never be known, but the find has excited archaeologists, who are unaware of anything comparable from the Roman world. If it was a practical joke, it was convincing, she said. "If you were working in a dark Roman room, because they didn't have a huge amount of indoor lighting, you could definitely see it as a little mouse," she said. "Especially because it's not [like] Mickey Mouse with big ears. It looks very realistic."

Vindolanda was built by the Roman army before Hadrian began constructing his 73-mile defensive barrier to guard the north-western frontier from invaders in AD122. It was an important garrison base, demolished and rebuilt repeatedly. It was there that archaeologists unearthed a cavalry barracks dating from AD105, finding extraordinary military and personal possessions left behind by soldiers.

Birley's husband Andrew is director of excavations and chief executive of the Vindolanda Trust. He said that mice would have been a constant pest in ancient Vindolanda. "When the granary buildings at Vindolanda were excavated in 2008, the bones from thousands of dead mice were uncovered below the floors of the buildings where they had been living and feasting on the ears of grain that had dropped between the flagstones into the basements of the buildings," he said. "It is perhaps therefore rather wonderful that someone 2,000 years ago

made a toy mouse from leather, crafting something to play with from their immediate environment."

Vindolanda's spectacular finds include famous writing tablets offering insights into the everyday lives of people living and working there 2,000 years ago, rare cavalry swords and the largest collection of boots and shoes to have survived from Roman Britain, among more than 7,000 leather objects and offcuts.

Studying every piece has been painstakingly slow. It is thanks to the coronavirus lockdown that curatorial staff have had the time to focus on the task.

The mouse had gone unnoticed when it was placed in a bag of scrap leather in 1993. It was among offcuts gathered by archaeologists who were then excavating the commanding officers residence dating to about AD105-130. The mouse had come from one of its rooms.

Birley said: "It just shows that the collection can continue to reveal things that we weren't expecting to find." They hope to display the mouse when the museum reopens.

This article appeared on the Guardian's website in May.

Janet

Ferdi

Archaeology is such fun

Our thanks go out to Ferdi for his humour.

Archaeology is such fun

He's kept us entertained it seems forever.

Every week he serenades us with witty words so fine

We'll miss the clever way he always makes it rhyme

He's running out of people now so time to say goodbye

Archaeology is such fun!

Is that thing off?!

Janet

All verses to date are on the following pages. Check if you are mentioned. All complaints to Ferdi if you are not mentioned.

Editor

Archaeology's such fun Or [Much squelching in North Marsh]

Archaeology's such fun
I thought I'd try to bring us all together
Archaeology's such fun
We're either stuck inside or outside on a tether
Here are some dodgy verses that I am going to send
You'll get them once a week, you'll look forwards to the end
If your name is mentioned it's not meant to offend.
Archaeology's such fun
We're out there no matter what the season
We're out there even when it's cold and freezin'
We trample over frosted grass looking for white paint
Someone says it's over here another says it ain't
Another swears and curses well we know he's not a saint
Archaeology's such fun
Arthur is the chairman our society
He enjoys he says the challenge and variety
He spends much time on Google earth staring at the screen
He is plotting where the grids must go and setting out the scene
Then we set the grids awry - it's enough to make him scream
Archaeology's such fun
Peter Wright is a member of committee
He's the man who keeps his fingers on our kitty
On finance and accounting we know he's very sound
He also knows that money is made to go around
but if you want to spend a fiver it's a job to get a pound
Archaeology's such fun
Peter English, is a former YCCCART chairman
He gets excited at anything that's Roman
He loves his archaeology in that he's not alone
But unlike the rest of us there is no need to roam
He could stay in his garden and dig up artefacts at home
Archaeology's such fun
Ian Morton is a 60I key member
Forget what to do and he will remember
He seldom walks the 60I he blames it on his knees
Though if we're very short, he's always there to please
I just means that the walking speed is cut to One point Three's
Archaeology's such fun
Janet Dickson is always such an asset
her notes cover every single facet
She informs us of the dates and times and what we need to do
She often asks for numbers so the facts she can accrue
But sometimes gets frustrated and I think that we would too
Archaeology's such fun
Philippa supplies our coffee and a biscuit
I'm not going to take the 'Mickie' - I wouldn't risk it.
She has always done a sterling job, with the 60I Then she scuttles off
- to ensure a drink for everyone
Then organises clear-up to ensure the jobs are done
Archaeology's such fun
Ann Dimmock is another to remember
Here's a memory that I will render
In the field you'll recollect once she took a spill
She disappeared below the grass and our concerns were real
She had tripped upon an anthill which we call a Dimmock still
Archaeology's such fun

John Wilcox has a camera at the ready
We know he is reliable and steady
He takes so many photographs of artefacts that's found
Plus Churches from the steeple to those buried in the ground
Then compromises people in positions that astound
He makes photography such fun
Now Mary is out in all the weather
It's nice to know we are again together
Geoff Pearson is her chaperone and Colin is there too
The others there survey the scene they're making up the crew
But Mary takes the Biscuit as she always used to do,
Archaeology's such fun
Liz Hales is our doctor in retirement
So certainly she knows about alignment
If in the field we break a leg Liz knows just what to do
She could splint it up and in 6 weeks it would be good as new
But if we dig up ancient bones she doesn't have a clue
Archaeology's such fun
But you always need a man to drive you forward
A man you all agree is such a stalwart
He's been around a long long time although his name is Short
He carries out a valued post and writes up each report
But when he does 'Chick Murray' - this man you cannot fault
Archaeology's such fun
Graham as you know lives on the Mendips
As an officer he surely would have 3 pips
He reminds me of a desert rat when a glimpse of him I caught
For in winter he was striding out in trousers very short
He's legs looked kind of bandy but of course that's not his fault
Archaeology's such fun
Our man from Clevedon really is an asset
He will take your finds and look at every facet
If you have a relic talk with our Dave Long
He'll tell you of its value or if it's going for a song
But if it's me that's singing then the valuations wrong
Archaeology's such fun
Vince Russet is a fountain of our knowledge
Cos he went to Oxford Hertford college
He scours round the countryside in Duke Zulu his car
He's looking for signs of life that go back very far
But ends up in a pub drinking Cider at the bar
Archaeology's such fun
John Evans is relatively a new comer
Who once earned a living as a plumber
He knows about leaky pipes and saturated soil
But the muddy tracks on Crossman ten made this man recoil
He sunk into the mud so deep he expected to strike oil
Much squelching on North Marsh
I'd like to thank two of our founders
Two that remain and are around us
Marianne a member still finding field work far too rough
Brian Wills, an Engineer, would make things off the cuff
But as two founder members we just can't thank them enough
Chee-e-ers to our founder members
There is man that you may never see now
But rest assured he really has the know how
Unsal works behind the scenes we seldom see his face
He keeps our website up to date he's always on the case
Although we never see him I guess he knows his place
Cheers to the man without a face

I know there are some I've still not mentioned
So now I'll bring the rest to your attention
There is Ian, Dave and Maureen still out there tuning in
Johnnie Haynes and Clive, where the devil have you been
They all must have excuses for I know they're all still keen
Archaeology's such fun

I forgot Martyn now has been recruited
That he'll be an asset somebody muted
Liz says he loves ancient things with her by his side
In history he is steeped, that is not denied
I think you'll all agree when you see the bike he'll ride
Archaeology's such fun

I think that everyone will now be happy
Though one person is not a happy chappy
If you're thinking of complaining You weren't named in a verse
I'll tell you now that you were, in the very first
Perhaps you can't recall it... it was you that swore and cursed
Archaeology's such fun

At the camera now I'm looking for the birdie
But on your side all you see is Ferdi
I've sung about everyone, Mike Fox is last of all
After 20 verses my brain began to stall
But here he is at last at least he's had the call
Archaeology's such fun

Archaeology's such fun
You probably think I'm good at criticizing.
Archaeology's such fun

Frankly I find that so surprising
I couldn't do the jobs you do, for in my ways I'm set
I'll soon be in my dotage - but I haven't got there yet
You'll know when Sue puts up a sign "There is a room to let"
Archaeology's such fun....until I started
ARCHAEOLOGY's SUCH FUN Isn't it just fun.

Ferdi