

# YCCCAR T

Yatton Congresbury Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team

Newsletter February 2022

## Chairman's chat

We start this edition of the newsletter with the sad news that Brian Wills passed away in late autumn. Geoff who knew Brian better than most of us has written a moving obituary with some input from Brian's son, Roger. Brian was a true gentleman and will be greatly missed.

The geophysical surveys continue with the RM15 team completing their work at Woodspring Priory. Vince has a watching brief regarding the repair of some boundary walls at the priory, that John photographed in great detail to document their condition. Landmark Trust is now having these walls repaired. The RM15 team have now moved to survey a field at Blagdon that the 601 gradiometry team surveyed at the request of the Blagdon Local History Society. The 601 team have started surveying the adjoining field further north beside the lake. So it looks like we will be in Blagdon until the cows are allowed out in the Spring. Coffee meetings have started again. Hope to see you all again.

Arthur

## Obituary

Brian Wills, a founder member of YCCCAR T, passed away on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 aged 84. Brian grew up in Hersham, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey and after secondary school in Shepperton, did his National Service in the RAF, where he concentrated on electronics. He joined the firm of Sperry, in Bracknell, as an electronics engineer, working on ground breaking projects.

He met his future wife, Ann, at a dance, and offered her a lift home in his 'wonderful' sports car. They were married in 1966, and had two children, Roger and Helen. The family later moved to BAE at Filton, finally settling in Claverham, where Brian and Ann attended their beloved, St Barnabas Church.

On retirement, they joined several local groups, including the Yatton Ramblers, and were founder members of YCCCAR T. He also had a model engineering workshop in his garage, creating model aeroplanes and clocks!

He was a staunch member of the YCCCAR T 'manual' team, being an active member until 2018, when, for health reasons, he was unable to join us in the field. He became Honorary President in 2019, and regularly joined the group for coffee. Brian remained cheerful through the early part of the Covid lockdown, being supported by his neighbours, but, after some illness, finally moved to Sycamore Lodge in Nailsea. There, his lovely smile, gentle personality and keenness to get involved in activities was noted by the staff.

Brian was friendly and determined, and his sense of humour remained with him until the end. He is fondly remembered by his many friends and family and will be greatly missed by all.

(Geoff Pearson; Roger Wills)



## Coffee Dates 2022

We meet for coffee on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of every month at the Methodist hall in Congresbury. 12.00pm- 1.00pm  
January 6<sup>th</sup>                      February 3<sup>rd</sup>                      March 3<sup>rd</sup>                      April 7<sup>th</sup>

We have a provisional date of May 5<sup>th</sup> for the AGM. (details to follow)



## The Joy of Churches

Churches are historical treasures and contain so much of our heritage, history and community.

### Yatton Church

Following photographic and documentary research on St Andrew's Church, Congresbury, teams from YCCCART have compiled reports for the churches at Kingston Seymour, Puxton and Wick St Lawrence (*outside only because of covid 19*). Reports on all these can be found on [ycccart.co.uk](http://ycccart.co.uk) We are now turning our attention to St Mary's Church, Yatton.

This wonderful and amazingly large church dating from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, was remodelled in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, restored in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has a late 20<sup>th</sup> century chapter house. I am grateful to the Yatton History Society and in particular Marianne Pitman for help and YCCCART members John Wilcox and David Long for photographs and continued support.

There is still a great deal to do to uncover and record the glories of this remarkable church but a small glimpse into what we have recorded follows.

### Tombs

The church contains the splendid alabaster tombs of Sir John Newton who died in 1449 and his second wife Emmota de Sherborne, who died in 1475.



### Graffiti

These alabaster tombs are full of graffiti, which to which today is generally seen as destructive and anti-social. However, in the past it appears to have been both accepted and acceptable.



Even the face of Sir John contains graffiti, including the animal. Is it a bear?



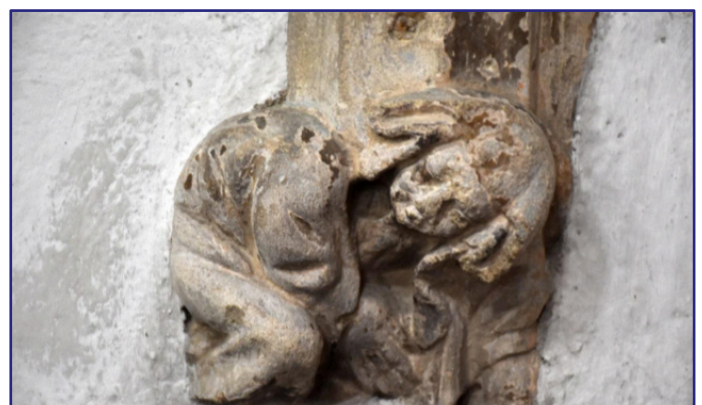
A full analysis of all graffiti is underway.



Note initial and date 1699.

### Figure in north aisle

Under a north east window is a delightful carved figure which probably came from the now demolished rood screen.





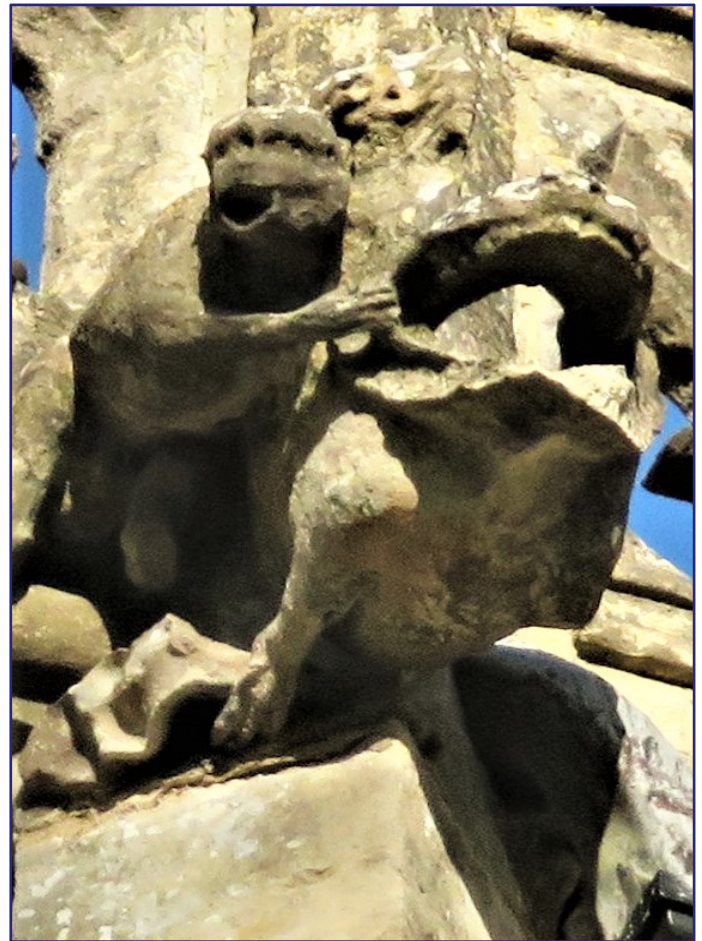
## The Green Man

The Green Man is primarily interpreted as a symbol of rebirth, representing the cycle of new growth that occurs every spring. This one is on the ceiling of the south porch.



## Gargoyle

A gargoyle is a grotesque carved human or animal face or figure projecting from the gutter of a building that acts as a spout to carry water clear of the wall. Yatton church has several interesting examples including the one below of an ape holding open the mouth of a toad.



Chris Short

## Neolithic mince pie anyone?

During the Stonehenge Riverside Project, a collaborative effort by five UK Universities, archaeologists have found evidence of the collection and cooking of hazelnuts, sloes and crab apples at Durrington Walls, the settlement inhabited by Stonehenge's builders, 4500 years ago. English Heritage have suggested, that in theory, since they also knew how to grow cereal crops, they could have made pastry from wheat, chestnut or acorn flour,

and combined the ingredients into a version of a mince pie, possibly baked on a flat stone or in a heated, ceramic pot.

The sweet versions we know today, and some meat-based ones, trace their origins at least as far back as the medieval period. According to Susan Greaney, a senior properties historian at English Heritage, it is likely the original neolithic 'pies' were eaten around the midwinter solstice – so nothing new there? (Source, Steven Morris, the Guardian, 1/12/21).



Recent excavations at Durrington Walls, Wiltshire



Geoff Pearson



## The Galloway Hoard

On a recent trip to Edinburgh I made a bee-line to the National Museum of Scotland to see the Galloway Hoard. Unfortunately I arrived two weeks too late; the exhibition had left to tour around Scotland, although disappointed I wasn't surprised that this incredible find was being shared across the country.



*Notice the different methods of folding*

The Galloway Hoard is reckoned to be the rarest and most unique collection of Viking Age objects ever found in Britain or Ireland. The 100 objects which were discovered by a metal detectorist in 2014 included 5k of silver bullion, beautiful rings and pins made of gold, a silver cross, a crystal jar wrapped in a silk pouch, the list just goes on and on.



*This one belonged to Egbert*

It's thought that the hoard was buried around 900AD and was not a single deposit but was made up of 4 separate layers. The uppermost layer was made up of 'hacksilver', bits and pieces of silver intended to be melted down and reused at some point. This layer is thought to have been a sacrificial layer designed to stop potential thieves from looking any further as just 10 centimetres below were where the most valuable objects were hidden.

The beauty and rarity of many of these objects is without question however this unique find is made doubly interesting because it wasn't the hoard of one single person. There are four inscribed silver arm bands, each one folded in a particular way and marked with runes; more bands in the lower deposits replicate these distinctive methods of identification. It's thought

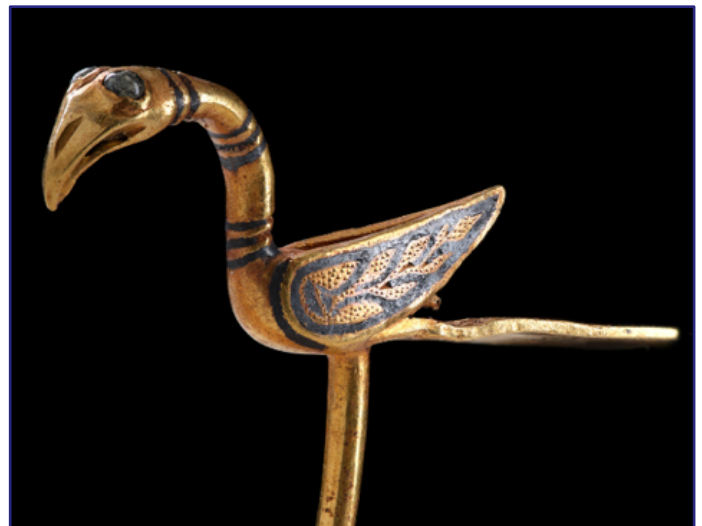
that this was done deliberately so that the owners of the silver would be able to identify their wealth at some point in the future.



*A silver vessel wrapped in fabric*



*Below is an An exquisite gold pin, it's very tiny.*







Another pin with these very expressive, almost comic little figures

An exhibition entitled The Galloway Hoard: Viking Age Treasure displaying key items from the Hoard is now on tour, first to Kirkcudbright Galleries from 9 October 2021 to 10 July 2022 and then on to Aberdeen Museum and Art Gallery from 30 July to 23 October 2022.

Janet Dickson

## Art and War

Artists have depicted war through painting, sculpture and the written word from the most ancient of times. For example -



Section of Trajan's column in Rome

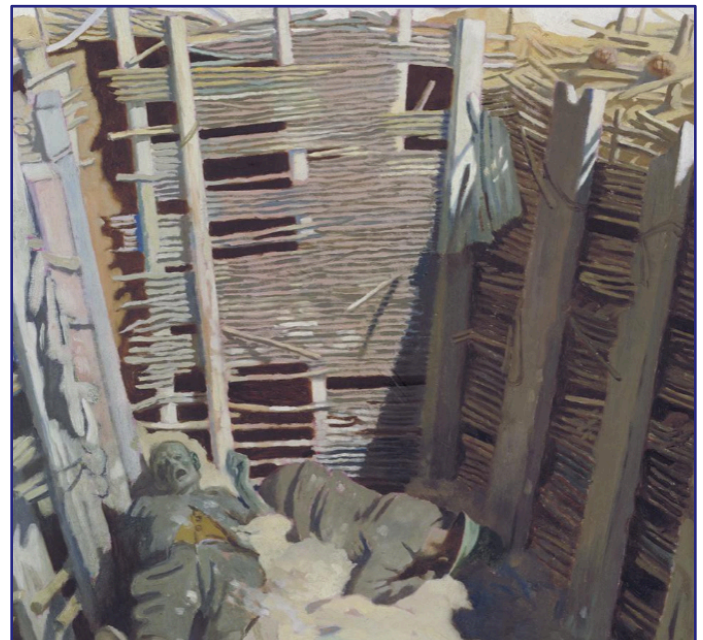


Oppy Wood, 1917. Evening, 1918, by John Nash.



Napoleon on campaign by Jean-Louis Ernest Meissonnier

The Twentieth Century saw the appointment of Official War Artists. Famously the First World War saw the work of John Nash, William Orpen and John Singer Sargent.



Section of painting: Dead Germans in a Trench, Sir William Orpen, 1918, Imperial War Museum, London, UK.





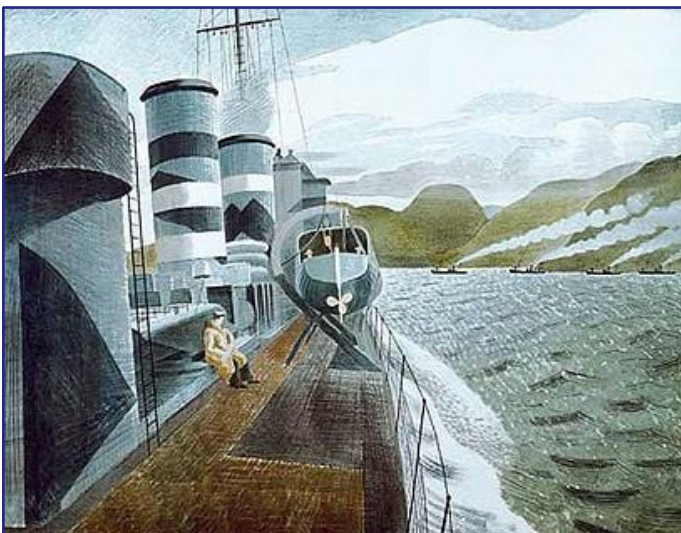
John Singer Sargent - *Gassed*, 1919 ,National WWI Museum and memorial

The War Artist work continued in World War II under the detection of Kenneth Clarke. Some of the finest work was produced by artist who may not immediately spring to mind.

Henry Moore of course famous for his sculpture produced a remarkable set of drawing of Londoners sheltering in the Underground during the blitz.



Eric Ravilious who died when the aircraft he was in was lost off Iceland is more usually known for his very stylistic landscapes of Sussex.



*Leaving Scapa Flow*, Eric Ravilious,

Laura Knight who focused on the home front and in particular the role of women in the war effort.

*(This woman, Ruby achieved a level of competence in weeks whereas before the war men had needed a seven year apprenticeship!)*



*Ruby Loftus screwing a Breech-ring*, Laura Knight

And the work continued in more recent conflicts e.g. Jules George in Afghanistan



And of course there is the importance of photography and film starting with images of the American Civil War and the Crimean War. But that would be a whole topic in itself.

Ian Morton



## A few more detector finds?

Here is another small selection of finds from my metal detecting days some years ago when I could get down to dig them up.



No. 1. A pair of Victorian G.P.O. buttons linked together by a small chain and would have been on a postman's cape. These were found when my father's builders yard was cleared for redevelopment.



No. 2. An assortment of copper alloy buckles from the 15th/16th century and would have been worn belts, shoes, gaiters and spurs. Found in various parts of Somerset.



No. 3. An unusual find is this brass butt plate from a rifle, possibly a Lee-Enfield, in the centre is the butt plate trap where the oil bottle would have been stored. Found near West Harptree.



No. 4. This is a clog clasp from a leather clog, it would have been clipped on to the hasp, this is a similar shape as the clasp with three or four slots to hook into dates from the 17th/18th century. These are not a common find in this area as the type of clog it came from were more mainly worn in the northern counties.

Dave Long

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## Articles please!

If you have read this far, perhaps you would consider submitting a brief article or some photographs. Something relating to local/regional events or finds is always welcome as it often helps to put in context YCCART survey analysis. However, we also welcome articles relating to places you have visited, either home or abroad that have some historical or archaeological interest. Commenting and reporting on books, reports, exhibitions can also be a source for an article. Sharing our knowledge and understanding is important. Remember YCCART has an educational remit and education is not limited to those in formal education. The phrase 'every day is a school day' springs to mind and is applicable to us all. Janet collates all the articles and photographs before sending them on to me for desktop publishing.



## The Ramsgate War Tunnels

The Tunnels were first opened as part of a railway on 5th October 1863, the line was to serve Ramsgate Harbour station. By 1926, Ramsgate had two stations run by two different companies, the Town station was run by South Eastern Railway, and the Harbour or Sands station was run by London, Chatham and Dover Railway. The lines were rationalised in 1926, and became the Southern Railway. Town station was rebuilt and a new station was opened at Dumpton Park, the Sands station and its tunnels were abandoned.



In 1936, the tunnels found a new use, and became part of a narrow gauge electric railway, linking Dumpton with a new station at Hereson Road, this amusement attraction opened on 31st July 1936.

By 1938, Ramsgate's borough engineer, R D Brimmell, had started working on plans to construct an underground protection system. The town already had underground shelters dating from World War I, situated in the east and west cliffs. The new system proposed more entrances in public places, so that most of the population would be within 1/4 mile of an access point. After much discussion, by the council, the plan was deferred.

However, in 1939, when it became clear about Hitler's intentions towards Czechoslovakia, a third application, to build the air raid tunnel system, was made. Eventually on 20th March 1939, permission was granted, by the Home Office, to the town, to build the tunnels.

As a result of the determined efforts of the Borough Council and contrary to Government policy, Ramsgate got its tunnels, which became the most extensive underground public shelter system in the country. The system of tunnels provided shelter

for 60,000 people, and was opened by the Duke of Kent on 1st June 1939. The Tunnels were 6 feet wide, 7 feet high and were 50-70 feet underground, this was to provide protection against random bombing from 500lb and 1000lb medium capacity bombs. On 24th August 1940, 500 bombs were dropped on the town, by a squadron of German aircraft approaching RAF Manston, the leading plane was shot down over Ramsgate harbour and in vengeance the planes dropped their bombs over the town, this was the first raid over an unprotected town.



When in use the tunnels were equipped with chemical toilets, bunk beds, seating, lighting and a public address system. Some people moved into the tunnels after being bombed out of their houses, on a permanent basis.



In 1945 the tunnels were sealed and abandoned, but in 1946, the tunnel was cleared and the Scenic Railway started up again, for a short while.

A Heritage group was formed in 2011, and was successful in gaining Heritage Lottery funding, the Tunnels are now a visitor attraction with guided tours.

Philippa Cormack