

YCCCCART

Yatton Congresbury Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team

Newsletter February 2021

Chairman's chat

In the last newsletter I was commenting on how some of us were finally back in the field surveying. Indeed one week we even had three teams out. The 601 team certainly seemed to enjoy the freedom, working together, out in the countryside, doing something useful, gentle banter and socially distanced coffee (and a few biscuits). Even the weather was good.

How things have changed. Let's hope that we can resume surveying by late Spring. Many thanks to all who have contributed to the email communication, either funny or serious. It certainly helps to maintain a sense of being a part of YCCCCART. May I also thank all the contributors to this edition of the newsletter. Stay safe and maybe by the time the next newsletter is published there will be something more positive to report.

Arthur

William Charles Wear

William Charles Wear was one of 12 children raised by Charles and Harriet Wear who lived in Stonewell Farm, Congresbury. Five of the brothers – Bill himself and, Percy, Sidney, Norman and Reginald - worked together and managed several farms in and around Congresbury where they had around 1000 acres of agricultural land, cattle and sheep to tend to. The farming five evidently specialised in a particular breed of 'blue' cattle and apparently Bill could "sheer a prize sheep as well as any man" according to a feature on the farming brothers that appeared in the Western Daily Press in April 1922.

Bill was said to be a lovely man who was very good to his workers. He had 11 gallons of cider that was "going off a bit." So he took it down the Dolemoors and left it. Soon he discovered all the cider had gone and asked his worker "What was it like?" The reply was. "Just right, any better we wouldn't have had it, any worse we couldn't have drink it."

Photo is at Yatton market, which took place on a Monday opposite the Market Inn. The photo, undated but probably 1930s, is taken one Christmas time. Bill Wear is on the right with the stick.



Bill Wear was quite a character. He regularly got drunk on whisky at Yatton market and his pony would take him in the trap to the Prince of Orange. This pony would, it is said, automatically stop at every pub between Stonewell Farm and Yatton Market.

Chris Short

Days out with Ferdi -

St. Nicholas Church Moreton

This is the church that I mentioned a couple of months ago, which is well worth a visit. Naturally it may be some time before anyone can make such a trip to Dorset. I had intended bringing photographs to a coffee morning, but as that is likely to be some way off also, I thought the Newsletter the next option.

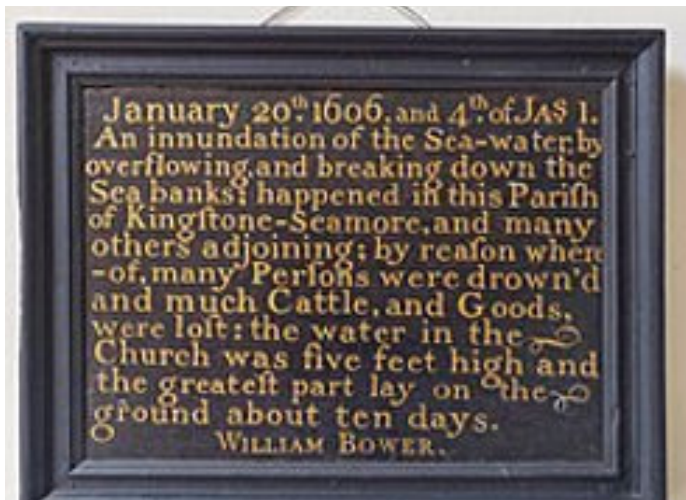
Back in 1940 this church, where a church has stood since 1190, was bombed and very badly damaged losing most of the north wall and left with no glass whatsoever. It wasn't until the 1950s that work began to restore the church.. A Laurence Whistler was invited to submit a design for new windows...His windows, which were etched and sandblasted, started to be installed in 1955...These windows are unique, with some actually depicting scenes from WW 2.. It makes a lovely day out and you will find it fascinating....Not to mention Lawrence of Arabia, buried in the cemetery.

“Good old YCCCART by the Sea”?

Well maybe not but much of the area that is the YCCCART bailiwick is not much more than five metres above sea level. So setting aside global warming sceptics for a moment the risk of flooding is not low.

The Congresbury Yeo, largely fed from Blagdon reservoir, runs through Congresbury to the sea. To quote Congresbury History Group

“Congresbury has long suffered from poor drainage and floods. In 1607 a great part of Congresbury was hidden by the sea and in 1656 a surveyor complained of the muddy moist un-healthiness of the air and poverty or idleness or both of residents in improving drainage. Of the great storm in 1703 the vicar of Ubley, not far away, wrote that the wind caused the sea to come in and their ground was spoiled and their cattle drowned. Indeed the moors were often covered by water for several months each year and not until the 1820s was anything major done”.



Pictorial records of flooding at Kingston Seymour

And a further quote from official publications

“River Yeo (Hewish to Congresbury) Located at ST39448, 65147 to ST44168, 63554 Man-Made Raised Defences - 15.8km in length, lowest point 6.45mOD - Standard of protection varies between 1 in 5yrs and 1 in 100yrs standard. - Maintained privately and by the EA”.

(Remember that once a flood has occurred the clock is reset so you can have successive 1 in 5 year floods).

As the various YCCCART survey teams go about their work they are never more than few metres from active rhynes. Some areas are out of bounds in winter due to water logged/ semi flooded fields. And of course Woodspring Priory has a fine winter moat.

And here are pictures of flooding in Congresbury

A Mrs Browning had vivid memories of the great flood of 1887, and how the water was washing over the counter of Mrs Wilkins' grocery shop which was then at Bridge House (shown on the 1950s picture below as Baileys but now occupied by Debbie Fortune, Estate Agents)



1950 High Street. Note there was a step down to the shop floor so any flooding would have extra depth



1968 Broad Street



2008 Millennium Green
Towards the tree line, the water is approaching 2 metres deep.



2008 Millennium Green
Towards the tree line, the water is approaching 2 metres deep.



It is however heartening to see that in the latest housing development in Congresbury (Cobthorn/Furnace Way) that attention has been paid to flood alleviation as shown in these pictures of the flood lagoon.



Who knows maybe the site of a future outside broadcast of 'Desert Island Discs'!

Ian Morton

Objects of crisis

If you are struggling to find ways of passing the time on these cold, wet lockdown days then I can thoroughly recommend the British Museum's Objects of Crisis videos available on YouTube. The objects chosen by the BM's curators or Trustees relate to moments of crisis in history and form a record of human resilience through adversity. This little lamp is a good example of how humans have had to adapt their way of life to cope when disaster, of one sort or another, strikes.



Towards the end of the 3rd millennium BC, a climate crisis in the Levant caused a shortage of olive oil. To overcome this, people started using fish oil as an alternative fuel, and lamps – like this one – needed four spouts instead of one to give the same intensity of light.

As you would expect the range of objects selected by the presenters reflect their curatorial interests but it's what these objects indirectly tell us about the past that is so fascinating. However not everything discussed is ancient. One short video featured the Lampedusa Cross a very contemporary addition to the BM's collection of powerfully significant artefacts.



The **cross** is made from pieces of a boat that was wrecked on 11 October, 2013 off the coast of **Lampedusa**. 311 Eritrean and Somali refugees were drowned en route from Libya to Europe. The inhabitants of **Lampedusa** helped to save the lives of 155 others.

Janet Dickson

Wells in Cleeve and Yatton

In 1991 and 1992 a survey of wells in Cleeve, Yatton and Claverham was made using information held by Yatton Local History Society, including the 1903 Ordnance Survey map, and from conversations with local residents.

Most of the sites are privately owned and not publicly accessible. Over one hundred wells and pumps have been identified and there may be many more. The map gives an indication of the siting of some wells, most of which were found near or in particularly farmhouses built before 1850, or nearby for example Old Farm, Yew Tree Farm and Appleacre (Old Church Farm) in Cleeve. At Church Farm there are a number of covered ones in the fields to the north providing water for the animals, etc.

There is still evidence of a well on the road verge in Littlewood Lane.

Before mains water became widely available any dwelling, group of dwellings and farm etc needed its own water supply and an underground source was the most reliable. Before 1847 no central government supervision of water supply existed and water was only piped to those who could afford it. Yatton which include Cleeve then did not get a piped water supply until 1910. Some wells were still in use in the early 1950s until they were discontinued because of the need for a demonstrably safe supply for dairy farming.

Use of private water supplies for drinking has been completely replaced by mains water locally (Woodspring District Council 1992). However, water from a small number of wells is still used for gardening.

The earliest reference found to a well in Yatton is a report that the churchwardens spent 16s. 4d. on a bucket and chain for the Church House well in 1473. By 1896 there was the luxury of a cast iron pump and stone trough which can still be seen in the parish church car park adjoining the bier house.

Many wells appear to have been dug outside the original walls of farmhouses but as the houses were enlarged the wells were incorporated in the kitchen, scullery or dairy as at Manor Farm, Claverham and still contain clear water.

Other wells posed challenges of a different kind. One was found at the junction of Church and Chescombe Roads on the site of former cottages where it still remains under the tarmac, albeit filled in to be found by further unsuspecting road menders.

Another interesting well is in a field at Claverham Green Farm where there was once a windmill used to pump water for farming use. It was also used by the neighbouring Grove Farm where the well, now covered is by the back door.

Most wells were stone lined for the first 10 feet, 6 feet across and up to 30 feet deep. The one at Cottage Farm, Claverham was stone lined then went through a layer of shale and had a wider base chamber to increase its capacity. The opening was narrower, made of a flat round stone with a central hole about 2 feet across. On some stones, as at Grove Farm, evidence of supports for a bucket can still be seen. Other wells were completely covered and hand pumps were used to raise the water as at Claverham Court and Prospect House, High Street, Claverham.

Most wells were renowned for not running dry, but when the

tannery at Court de Wyck was using a lot of water the wells in Claverham. nearly did so.

At Bishops Farm the well fed a 600 gallon tank in the roof of a barn from which water was piped to eight cattle troughs with the help of a motorised pump. This well was mentioned in auction details of 1854. Similar arrangements existed at Claverham Court.

Besides wells, soft water was collected in cisterns from roofs. One still exists in the stable yard of Claverham House and contains clear water. The cistern has a round opening and a stone lined neck with a brick lined vault beneath. The vault is 6 feet deep and 9 feet wide. There was a similar one at Bickley.

Industrial water supplies were found at Wake & Dean's factory in a deep borehole near the internal railway line. Also, there were the tanks at the railway station for each of the four lines which were used to replenish the engines.

Other interesting wells were the reputedly holy ones, one at Court de Wyck and two near Claverham Road. The name 'Bishops Well' is all that remains, but they were reported in 1923 to have had a reputation for curing consumption or TB. They appear to have been springs which flowed into the Yeo, perhaps from the same source as the Henley wells. Now only a displaced stone marks the site of Bishops Well behind Claverham Road on Brook Farm land.

Adapted from an article in Yatton Yesterdays 9, 1992. Marianne Pitman May 2021

Marianne Pitman

Days out with Ferdi -

Merryvale prehistoric site on Dartmoor

Merryvale was in use for over 1500 years from the Neolithic to the Middle Bronze Age. The first monuments being erected around 2500BC. The site fell out of use around 1000BC. There are 36 Hut Circles spread over 4 separate enclosures. Some huts were excavated in 1895 and charcoal layers were found in all 16.

Stone rows South of the settlement run East to West, consisting of two double stone rows separated by a stream, which looks man made with stone hemming in the 50 cm wide stream which would have given them fresh water. The Northern double row of stone, most no more than half a metre high, run for around 200 metres. There is also a burial chamber with a massive Capstone broken in three with the centre piece missing.

Well worth a visit if you are in the Devon/ Cornwall area, or visit [Legendary Devon](#).

Ferdi

Chatham Historic Dockyard

In August I managed to visit Chatham Historic Dockyard, the working dockyard closed in 1984. It has records dating back to the Restoration of ships built there, the most famous being HMS Victory built in 1765, and HMS Temeraire in 1798. Today the site is used for TV and Films settings, these include 'Call the Midwife', 'Mr Selfridge', 'Grantchester' and 'Downton Abbey'.

When the site was being turned into a museum, several archaeological discoveries were made, these included artefacts from the original HMS Invincible, and more surprisingly, the timbers from HMS Namur dated 1756, which were found beneath the floor of the old wheelwrights workshop. - see photographs.



Philippa Cormack

In case you missed it.
A recently excavated Pompeii snack bar in a remarkable state of preservation.

It stood at the junction of two thoroughfares to catch the passing trade with the frescoes depicting what's on the menu; chicken and mallard duck!

The frescoed hot food and drinks shop, also known as a *termpolium*, was discovered last year in Pompeii's archaeological park to the south-east of Naples, [Italy](#).

Traces of pork, fish, snails and beef were found in the containers that were discovered along with the snack bar.



Janet Dickson

Vince's Corner

Save that archive!

Having had experience during various lockdowns of a particular problem. I'd like everyone to think about this.

All archaeologists have collections of photographs, transparencies and notes taken during campaigns of fieldwork or documentary research that have never been published, but would be of huge historical importance as they grow older. Most collections sit in cupboards or filing cabinets until the person who made them dies or goes into a home, when their well-meaning but uninterested relatives clear out and dump 'all this old rubbish', especially if it stems from an earlier generation of technology.

Speaking for personal experience, until I began using digital cameras, I had taken nearly 18 thousand colour transparencies of archaeological interest alone (to say nothing of natural history or family photos!), and have only very recently finished scanning them to disc.

And make certain they are meaningfully indexed: there is little more frustrating than finding a set of photographs of unknown sites that would be of interest if you knew who or where they were - the old Victorian photo album syndrome: they knew who they were, but we don't.

Then a further critical move is to include provision for your archive in your Will, and gift it to an archive (preferably the Somerset Heritage Centre or similar). Don't forget to specify where it physically (or digitally) is!

Oh, yes, and don't forget the first Commandment of the Digital Age; Back up! Back up! Back up! Once on-site, and once off.

I've added a couple of examples.



An air photograph of the decoy pool in Hythe Lane, March 1982, before infilling by the farmer later that year.



The first photograph I consciously regarded as an archaeological record: Wedmore village cross, August 1973

Vince Russett

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Postponed yet again folks!