



Yeovil Archaeological and Local History Society

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Newsletter

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The hunting mosaic from East Coker

Editorial

The Christmas season brought sad news this year. The sudden death of Duncan Black, our Chairman, leaves those of us who knew and worked with him deeply saddened by his passing. He had led a full life and over recent years had worked with great diligence in the Society's interests and with the South Cadbury Environs project. His shoes will take some filling and Maurice Tomlin's offer to become acting chairman has been gladly accepted by the Committee.

On a more positive note the membership has increased of late to almost 100. This should not make us complacent though – 100 has long been thought by the committee to be the minimum number of members required to ensure the Society's long term survival and in the mid 1990s we had a membership of over 150!

The Lufton Villa project, unfortunately postponed at short notice in the autumn, will take place in late February or early March. Please contact me if you would like to be involved.

If you have any thoughts on the issues raised above please feel free to contact us: emails can be sent to: newsletter@yalhs.org.uk Any attachments as Microsoft Word (.DOC) or TEXT (.TXT) files please.

James and Sally.

New Members

Welcome to: J Bottomley, T. Dickinson, E Husband, H. Jackson, H. Rose, C. Taylor, N. Tinkley, J. Mullens, E. Lempsink and J. Downing who have all joined recently.

Incidentally, we have just learnt that Isobel Rendell, the Society's second chairperson is approaching her 102nd Birthday!

Programme 2009

All lectures take place at 7:30pm in Holy Trinity Church, Lysander Road, Yeovil. Visitors are very welcome and are charged £1.50 per meeting (not £1 as misprinted in the last Chronicle)

Meetings

9th January *Members Evening*

6th February *The Evidence for Cannibalism in the West Country* (Sue Jones tbc)

6th March *Workhouses* (Pat Hase)

3rd April *Somerset Wills and the County Record Office* (May Siraut)

1st May *The Annual General Meeting* and ‘entertainment’

Summer Visits

(exact dates to be confirmed)

June Own transport *trip to Dartmoor* with an expert guide is planned. The committee would like expressions of interest from the membership. If you’re interested please contact Brian Gittos.

July Own transport trip to *Martock* to view the church and treasurer’s house.

Yeovil: the hidden history

The Society’s publication – *Yeovil: the hidden history* – is available at a substantially reduced rate of £9.95 from Brian Gittos. All proceeds go to the Society and at 160 pages, including colour plates this handsome volume is a real bargain!

Archaeology and the Credit Crunch

Last year few of us would have thought that 2008 was going to bring about the beginning of a major economic crisis. The credit crunch is now a household term and its impact is beginning to be felt in the archaeology sector.

Those of us who work in commercial archaeology know how reliant we are on the property markets and housing developments (left). Currently, the Institute for Archaeologists suggests half of its members have lost their jobs



or are seriously worried about them and during the last recession 75% of the archaeologists in London (and probably the country) were laid off... for those of us on short contracts (especially diggers) it is looking like an increasingly bad time to be an archaeologist.

As the recession bites falling tax revenues are likely to put pressure on 'non-essential' public spending. Archaeology is a soft target for such cuts and this will probably impact on English Heritage funding, local government positions and the like.

Academia will suffer too as banks get ever more wary about personal debt. Borrowing £10000 to study an MA may get more difficult and students will be wary about studying for an ever more uncertain career path. This may put pressure on some of the smaller archaeology departments as student numbers fall.

Finally, we come to local societies. Here I think two points are important. First, people will begin to look more closely at their non-essential spending and membership may decline as a consequence. Second, many local societies have money invested in the stock market and this provides much of their funding for events and publications. With returns on the stock market likely to be poor difficult times may lie ahead.

James Gerrard

The Baptist Chapel in Huish

The demise of the Baptist Chapel in Huish was reported in the current edition of *Chronicle* (p. 125) with the suggestion that it was to be replaced by a block of flats. However this has not happened and the shell of the building has survived, albeit converted into residential accommodation. The 1895 foundation stone has been removed, apparently for preservation elsewhere. An outline of its history can be gleaned from Leslie Brooke's informative book, *The Baptists in Yeovil*, (2002). The building had two floors, with the chapel itself on the first floor and school rooms etc below. The Chapel was opened on 21st November 1895 with a sermon preached by Rev. Newman. During WWI, a Young People's Guild was launched which proved very popular but the shortage of men-folk created problems and in 1916 a Deaconess, Sister Alice Redfern, agreed to assist at Huish for the coming year. She eventually served at Huish until after the war was over and her departure was followed by another sharing arrangement with Sherborne. By 1921 there was a need for a new organ and better lighting but it was not until five years later that the organist was provided with a light bulb. Over many years the organ was patched and repaired but it was not until the 1980s that money was found for a replacement.

In WWII the air raids cause problems. If a warning occurred during a service, those who lived within five minutes walk were free to leave but the service continued for those who remained. During Sunday School, the response to air raids was to move the Primary Department from the ground floor, to join the main school in the chapel. In late 1940, evening meetings were suspended due to the air raid threat. Despite the war time difficulties, a new heating system (albeit with second hand radiators) was installed at a cost of £26. In 1944 the forms used for seating were replaced by chairs and a carved oak communion table was provided by one of the elders. Improvements to the building were made in 1955 with a new minister's vestry, new entrance and two new class rooms, in time for the Diamond Jubilee celebration in November 1955. Two years later the chapel was licensed for marriages but in 1961 doubts were cast about its future, due to its cramped location and the condition of the building. During the 1980s, attention focused on the need to rebuild the South Street church which resulted in the Public Enquiry of 1988, to which the YALHS made a submission. The South Street church was closed in 1989 and Huish gained a new importance as a centre for worship while the wrangling over the South Street project dragged on. This was finally resolved by the scheme begun in 2001 and completed in 2003. Huish then became redundant, was closed and eventually sold for redevelopment.

Brian Gittos

From the Treasurer

Subscriptions are due on 1st January and if you have not already made a remittance it would be appreciated if this can be done. If members have a standing order would you please check that it's for the correct amount:

Individual £6.50 Couples £9.50 Family £11 J
unior/Student £1

GIFT AID SCHEME

This enables tax to be reclaimed on all donations to a charity. Therefore it is now possible for the Society to obtain currently 28p in the £ tax refund on any donation to the Society including annual subscriptions if members are tax payers and sign a Gift Aid Declaration. An amount of tax equivalent to the amount to be claimed must already have been paid to the Inland Revenue. This would provide the Society with a considerable increase in its income without incurring any extra expense to members or to the Society. For any members not already participating in this scheme and would like to do so please contact the Treasurer for the relevant form.

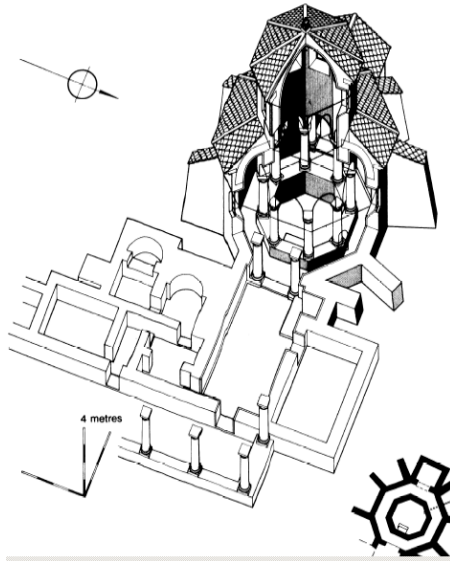
Obituary: Bill Putnam

Bill Putnam (Bournemouth University) was one of Dorset's premier archaeologists with a long history of excavating Roman sites around Dorchester. He last spoke to the Society in 1995 - in characteristic charismatic style - on Dorchester's Roman aqueduct, whose source he and his team had traced for many miles. His short book *Roman Dorset*, first published in 1984 by the Dovecote Press, remains a useful introduction to the period in the County and a pair to Peter Leach's more recent *Roman Somerset*. His death is a loss to Roman studies in the South West and it is to be hoped that much of his fieldwork will be published in the near future.

The Lufton Villa Project

The proposed geophysical survey of the Villa site had to be postponed at the last minute – my apologies to all who had volunteered to help. The postponement was due to the difficult ground conditions. However, I am pleased to announce that English Heritage have extended our licence to survey the monument until April. The field is due to be planted with beans in late February or early March and will be ready to be surveyed just after planting. Please get in touch if you want to be involved!

James Gerrard



Reconstruction of the baths at Lufton from *Architecture in Roman Britain* (CBA Res Report 94, Fig 13.2)

Obituary: Duncan Black

It is with great regret that we must record the sudden death, over Christmas, of the Society's Chairman, Duncan Black. After a career in the Royal Navy,



Duncan developed a deep interest in the First World War which blossomed into an affinity for archaeology, in all its guises. He studied at Strode College and Bournemouth University before gaining a Masters degree in Archaeology from the University of Bristol. His many research projects included the World War II defences of the Yeovil area; the archaeology of the Second World War air station at Henstridge; the landscape development of the Charltons (his home area) and the deserted settlement at Draycott near Limington. He contributed one of the chapters to *Yeovil: The Hidden History* in 2004. His interests drew him into many organisations and in addition to his work with YALHS, he was a prominent member of the South Cadbury Environs Project, a founder of the

Charltons Society and a researcher with the Lytes Cary project. His research into the archaeology of WWII led him to become a major contributor to the Historic Environment Record.

Duncan first joined the YALHS Committee in 2001, becoming Vice Chairman in 2005 and taking over the Chairmanship in 2007. During that time, his enthusiasm and drive ensured the Society's participation in the annual National Archaeology Day activities and fostered cooperation between the Society and the South Cadbury Environs Project. He undertook the duplication and distribution of the *Newsletter* and was currently spearheading a collaboration between YALHS, SCEP and the South Somerset Museums Service for the summer's Archaeology Day event. Duncan's warm and enthusiastic presence will be missed by all members of the Society, by the whole of the local archaeological community and by his many friends. His contribution to our understanding of the area will remain, a testimony to his immense capacity for hard work and a lasting legacy to those who follow.