

Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society



Newsletter 83 - Winter 2009



Sam Scriven, Dorset County Council's Earth Science Adviser, with the pliosaur's lower jaw

Dorset County Museum, High West Street, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XA

Tel: (01305) 262735 Fax: (01305) 257180

www.dorsetcountymuseum.org

enquiries@dorsetcountymuseum.org

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A “Sea Dragon” for Dorset County Museum

The fossilised skull of a Pliosaur, the largest marine reptile that ever lived, has been discovered on the Dorset coast – and will soon arrive to go on permanent display in the Jurassic Coast Gallery at Dorset County Museum.

The skull is 2.4 metres long and could belong to a creature measuring up to 16 metres in length from tip to tail and weighing up to 12 tonnes. It is believed to be 155m years old.

A type of plesiosaur, the pliosaur had a short neck and a huge, crocodile-like head that contained immensely powerful jaws with a set of, razor-sharp teeth.



Richard Forrest, a plesiosaur expert and advisor to the Jurassic Coast marine heritage site team said the discovery was fortunate because pliosaur skulls were generally found crushed flat.

"What is fantastic about this new skull, not only is it absolutely enormous, but it is pretty much in 3D and not distorted. You have this wonderful lower jaw – and you can just see from the depth and the thickness that this was immensely strong."

The fossil was found by local collector Kevan Sheehan in Weymouth Bay, although the precise location of the discovery is currently being withheld as Dorset County Council do not want crowds of fossil collectors overwhelming an area that is prone to landslides.

Scientists believe this Dorset specimen is the largest complete pliosaur skull ever discovered and is of ‘international importance’ to palaeontology. Undoubtedly its discovery rivals finds made in Svalbard, an archipelago in the Arctic Ocean, where a specimen dubbed “Predator X” was thought to have measured 15m, and in Mexico, where the “Monster of Aramberri” was discovered in 2002, and is believed to have been of similar dimensions.

Purchased on behalf of DNHAS by Dorset County Council with money from the Heritage Lottery Fund, it will now be scientifically analysed, prepared and then put on public display at Dorset County Museum sometime early in 2011.

Dorset County Museum – Opening Hours 2010

1 January – 31 March

Tuesday to Saturday 10am – 4pm

1 April – 31 October

Monday to Saturday 10am – 5pm

1 November – 31 December

Tuesday to Saturday 10am – 4pm

Message from the Director – Welcome to the New Chairman

It is my pleasure to welcome Carola Campbell as the newly elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Carola was elected onto the board in July of 2008, after serving several years on the Advisory Panel. Carola brings a wealth of experience and a unique set of skills to the role. Her professional life has included an early career in archaeology, later retraining in IT & business.

As an archaeologist Carola specialised in human osteology working primarily in Cyprus and the Middle East. She has a number of publications to her credit, the most recent being *The Human Skeletal Remains of Sotira Kaminoudhia* [American Schools of Oriental Research Archaeological Reports No. 8, 2003]

During her long career at Barclays Bank, Carola held a number of senior positions in IT and Operational Transformation. For the last several years Carola has been in what she describes as ‘semi retirement’. She has held company directorships and trusteeships in charities. Carola lives in north Dorset with her husband Angus. They have two grown up daughters

I am looking forward to working with Carola to secure the long-term future of DNHAS and the Museum. Should any member of the Society ever wish to speak to either Carola or myself, we have a regular Friday ‘open surgery’ between 2 and 3:30pm. Feel free to drop in to raise any issues, queries or suggestions you might have.

Jon

Chairman’s Chat

It is a great privilege to be elected Chairman of DNHAS. The Society has a venerable history dating back to the founding of Dorset County Museum in 1845. We are blessed with very special collections that encompass all aspects of Dorset’s heritage from the natural sciences and geology to art, history and literature. It is the society’s objects to collect, preserve, exhibit these for the enjoyment and education of all. It is a challenging mission but one to which I am deeply committed.

The DNHAS, as with many other societies and museums, is facing a number of challenges. The recession is impacting attendance and membership numbers, and grant funding is more difficult to obtain. In addition the Society has been operating on a deficit budget for several years due to its relatively high running costs. The Director and Board are working together to turn this around.



However there is also a lot of good news! The DNHAS continues to be supported by many loyal and expert volunteers that assist in all aspects of running the Museum and the Society. The director and I are very grateful to them for all their dedication and hard work. The Museum also benefits from significant support from the County Council and the West Dorset District Council.

Jon and his team have put together an exciting programme of exhibitions and events – this summer’s Ladybird ‘Make and Do Mornings’, the current ‘Country Houses in Edwardian Dorset’ exhibition, and the Night in the Museum Halloween Sleepover – to name just a few.

The Museum is looking forward to receiving several major finds recently discovered in Dorset.

The remains of 51 young adults dating to Saxon times. found in a mass burial exposed on the Ridgeway when building the Weymouth Relief Roads. These are currently being studied by Oxford Archaeology.

The fossilized skull of a plesiosaur discovered on Dorset’s Jurassic Coast. Currently undergoing research and preparation for display, this is believed to be the largest marine carnivore ever found.

If you haven’t been into the Museum lately, do come see us soon. Or if you’d like to get more involved in the activities of the Society and its Museum, why not consider becoming a volunteer. For more information on volunteering please contact Catherine Frost on 01305 262 735 or e-mail secretary@dorsetcountymuseum.org

Carola



Membership of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society – Important changes for 2010

Important alterations to the way membership of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society is administered are in the pipeline. From 1 January 2010 the existing system of 13 different categories of membership will be simplified to seven. These are:

- Single - £24
- Joint (two adults and up to 4 children) - £34
- Museum Club (7-14)/ Junior (15 -21) - £10
- Institutional - £55
- Patron - £175
- Single Life - £700 (under 60) / £500 (over 60)
- Joint Life - £1000 (under 60) / £800 (over 60)

Although there are changes to the subscription fee for 2010 a new range of benefits is being introduced to give members even better value for money in their subscription. From 2010 all adult/ joint members of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society will receive:

- Unlimited visits to Dorset County Museum and its programme of temporary exhibitions*
- Free entry to the extensive evening academic lecture programme
- A regular Newsletter to keep them up to date with the latest happenings at the Museum
- Exclusive access to a range of special ‘members only’ activities including:
 - A members only annual showpiece ‘Society Lecture’ during the summer
 - Discounted Day Trips to museums, galleries, houses, gardens and places of interest in Dorset and further afield
 - A Christmas drinks reception showcasing the latest acquisitions
- Unlimited access to the DNHAS library, with its extensive collections of local and specialist books
- A book of discount vouchers for special events or to use in the shop
- A guaranteed invitation to at least one temporary exhibition preview evening per year

In addition, only members of DNHAS can subscribe to its journal, *The Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*. An annual subscription to this widely respected academic journal containing wide ranging and authoritative articles on Dorset’s history and environment is just an additional £15 per year (incl. post and packaging to a UK address).

On top of this package Patron Members receive an inclusive copy of the *Proceedings*, invitations to all temporary exhibition preview evenings, free entry to all Museum activities and events in the year and the inclusion of their name on a special ‘Patrons of the DNHAS’ commemorative panel in the Museum foyer.

What do you need to do? Nothing! If you are already a patron, full single or full joint member of DNHAS, when your renewal is due in 2010 we will automatically transfer your membership to the appropriate new category and place you on the *Proceedings* subscription list. An added benefit for members living in Dorset is that from 2010 the *Proceedings* will be posted out to you directly, rather than you having to come and collect it. Existing Associate, Museum Club and Student members will also be automatically transferred to the appropriate new category.

* NB – The existing system of ‘Annual Entry Tickets’ for the Museum is being phased out and from December 2009 no more of these tickets will be issued. From then on the only way to get unlimited entry to Dorset County Museum will be by joining the DNHAS.

Textile Volunteers Visit to Central St Martins

In June, seven volunteers from the Dorset County Museum Textile Collection visited ex-Director of the Museum, Judy Lindsay, in her new position as head of the Museum and Study Collection at Central St Martins College of Art and Design. Judy and her colleague Anna introduced us to different aspects of the archive that was established by W.R. Lethaby at the turn of the 20th Century to collect examples of work by the tutors of the college, many connected to the arts and crafts movement, as a visual study resource for students. The archive included books of patterns and design by Owen Jones and Pugin, examples of embroidery collected by Mary Morris, daughter of William Morris, original drawings for historical and theatrical costume by Jeannetta Cochrane and visual research by Norah Waugh for her dressmaking and tailoring books such as 'Corsets and Crinolines'. After lunch at the local Italian, we visited the store rooms to look at the unique collection of wood block printed textiles and garments produced by another Central School tutor, Joyce Clissold, between 1924-27.



The picture shows Judy next to Billie at the lunch.

Billie Brown

Presidential Restoration



You may have noticed the portrait of J.C. Mansel-Pleydell, which now hangs on the wall in the entrance lobby above the lift. During this summer, it underwent much-needed cleaning and restoration by a professional picture restorer. This work was paid for by the Mansel-Pleydell Trust.

John Clavel Mansel-Pleydell was President of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club (as it was then) from 1875 to 1902 and was energetic in developing the Dorset County Museum and the Field Club. When he died, a collection was made to provide a memorial to him. With the funds, a copy of his portrait (the original is in the family home at Smedmore) was painted and hung in the Museum. However, such was the affection in which he was held, that there was a substantial sum of money left over, and this was used to set up the Mansel-Pleydell Trust fund in 1905. Over a hundred years later, this Trust still

carries out its functions of awarding prizes for the annual Essay Competition set up in his name, and in supporting the Museum in its various activities. The Trustees felt it appropriate that they should support the restoration of such an important picture for the Museum.

Details of the Mansel-Pleydell Essay Competition can be found by application to the Secretary, Mrs Ann Smith, c/o Dorset County Museum.

Ann Smith

Great Dorset Treasures – Revealed

In our July Newsletter 82 I announced the acquisition by purchase of the largest hoard of Bronze Age axes ever found in Britain, discovered and excavated in 2007 at Langton Matravers - over 400 axes placed into four pits around 2800 years ago.

This wonderful hoard was transferred to the Archaeology Collections at All Saints' Church on 17th March 2009, so that it could be prepared for first exhibition at Dorset County Museum, as was elegantly depicted in the Newsletter cover image prepared by George Wickham. The hoard display was unveiled on Friday 19th June at a Private View for all donors who altogether had contributed over £10,000 to the DNHAS Treasure Fund, for purchase and first display. An event much enjoyed by all and a pleasure indeed for the Curator to present the "Bronze Gifts to the Gods" and thank all who contributed and put together the exhibition - "This is one of the most important acquisitions for the museum in recent years – a Treasure from prehistory with a unique Dorset identity that has been returned to the county where it was designed, made and buried so many years ago. A find of national significance to Bronze Age studies that can now be displayed in the county – we are thankful to all who made this possible".



The premiere exhibition of the hoard, 20th June - 8th September, was constructed in one of the largest of the museum's wooden lectern cases, the last to be made in the style of those first museum cases designed for the exhibition of ever growing museum collections. It was in the Museum Exhibition Hall that the first great Treasure to be purchased by the museum was exhibited in a wooden case such as this in the centre of the hall - the Early Bronze Age group of precious objects from Cladon Barrow. The case had been redressed on many occasions since, but still retained the carefully conserved dedication plate, inscribed - "IN MEMORY OF : NELSON MOORE RICHARDSON, B.A. : PRESIDENT 1904 – 1925". The case was rebuilt and lined by Brian Welch, with a desiccant concealed below the new panels to maintain an environment suitable for the display of metalwork – at below 55% Relative Humidity.



Conservation of the axe hoard, at All Saints' Church, was undertaken by Mike Henderson of MHCR, to stabilise the collection with the assistance of Archaeology Working Group members. The whole hoard was gently dry-brushed and marked by Jeremy Hooker and Maddie Down and every individual axe and fragment was photographed on both sides by George Wickham, over a thousand images and more!

Since first display the planned period of study for publication has begun. When a comprehensive catalogue is complete, parts of the hoard will be again placed on display in 2010. Full display in the Archaeology Gallery will not be achieved in the near future without attracting funds and grants – needing a design project that would include a new section on later Bronze Age Dorset, housed in a case with a controlled environment and new lighting.

Beside the great Langton Matravers Treasure, another smaller Treasure has been purchased and is on display - a long sought Treasure from Cerne Abbas. This is an elegant gold finger ring of the 15th Century AD. The hoop is engraved with a blackletter inscription, alternating with sprigs of foliage and a lozenge design, against a hatched ground. The inscription is difficult to decipher, but may read 'cest + en bone [?] foy' ('it is in good faith'). The ring may have been a marriage or love token.



To support the purchase and display of Treasure there have been two generous gifts. Jennifer Martindale, inspired by "Bronze Gifts to the Gods?" in 2008, created a print entitled "Winter Offering" from which were printed 200 plain greetings cards for sale at £1.00 each - an ideal card for the Christmas Season. The other gift is off-print copies from the *Proceedings of The Prehistoric Society*, "The Clandon Barrow Finery", by Ann Woodward and Stuart Needham, a seminal paper on this Early Bronze Age Treasure of international significance in Bronze Age studies and the first Treasure to be purchased by the Dorset County Museum in 1890, some 120 years ago – not to be missed at £5.00 with cover. Both on sale in the Museum Shop with proceeds to the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Treasure Fund.

Peter J Woodward, Curator

Steaming Cream and promoting the Society



On September 20th, at the invitation of Simon and Ursula Pomeroy, an afternoon of steam rides behind the museum's traction engine, the "Hayden Princess", and cream teas, provided by "The Friends of Puddletown Church", was an event much enjoyed by all ages. The small table, promoting the Society, was manned by Ann Woodward, whilst a wide range of money-making stalls raised additional funds for Puddletown Church. The share of ticket sales raised some £200 for the Society in addition to the enthusiasm of visitors who had not been aware of the working engine in the Dorset County Museum Collections – several requests and invitations to steam in 2010 were made between mouthfuls of scone, jam and of course cream – " ... and is there cream still for steam" or is it honey and tea.

In 2010 the "Hayden Princess" has again been invited to work with The South Wiltshire Agricultural Preservation Society, SWAPS, at The Great Dorset Steam Fair in late August. This will be a particularly good opportunity in this coming year as it is hoped that there will be space in the SWAPS Marquee for the Society to have a display stand and exhibition relating to the Museum's Agricultural Collections. Volunteers to man such a stand will be needed and a long day with arrival before 10am and/or camping will be required, sometimes in muddy conditions! If you are interested in a free entry ticket in exchange for promoting the Society in Steam do contact the Director.



Peter J Woodward, Curator



Dorset Record Society **Dorset in Wartime, the Diary of Phyllis Walther 1941-1942**

Phyllis Walther worked as a volunteer for the WVS in Blandford and witnessed at first hand the effects of war. She was responsible for the welfare of evacuees and for providing clothing for displaced children and their mothers. She organized the provision of hand-knitted comforts for the troops and despaired of the tangle caused by garments mistakenly knitted in the wrong sizes and wrong service colours. She is an acute observer of patriotic fund-raising events and local military exercises and her descriptions of some of the inevitable muddles make amusing reading. Phyllis had an enquiring mind and decided opinions. Everyday life in wartime Dorset comes alive in her diary.

Her diary has been transcribed by Robert and Patricia Malcolmson, who have published several diaries including *Nella Last's Peace*. The text is expanded with footnotes and contemporary newspaper reports and indexed. The book is hardback, with a colour jacket. It is illustrated with contemporary and family photographs, and also delightful line drawings from the Dorset W.I. War Record Book. There is a Glossary of terms, particularly of the many acronyms current at the time.

This is a new publication – ideal for Christmas!

Price £12.50 plus £2.50 postage and packing. Orders may be collected from the Museum to save postage. Cheques should be made payable to **Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society**.

An order form is enclosed with this Newsletter. Orders should be sent to:

Hon General Secretary, Dorset Record Society, c/o Dorset County Museum,
High West Street, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XA.



Ann Smith

New Exhibition:

THE HAND MADE POT

12th December 2009 - 13th February 2010



This sales exhibition focuses on the work of Richard Batterham and Mike Dodd, two of the finest studio potters working in the country today. It also looks at the work of two potters who were key influences in their development: Donald Potter and Katharine Pleydell-Bouverie. A great opportunity for alternative Christmas gifts not forgetting the large selection of items, including new products, which we have on sale in the museum shop.

Richard Batterham in the pottery at Bryanston School

Vaccination Pioneer Benjamin Jesty Comes Home To Dorset!

In October this year the portrait of Benjamin Jesty by Michael W Sharp returned to Dorset for the first time in over 70 years and went on public display for the first time in over 200 years.

Jesty carried out the world's first effective vaccinations in Dorset 22 years before Dr Edward Jenner - the man generally regarded as the pioneer of this groundbreaking medical technique.



Jesty, a dairy farmer, was born and lived in Yetminster. Made aware by his dairymaids that cowpox protected against smallpox, Jesty vaccinated his family during an epidemic in 1774. He used a stocking needle to collect cowpox from the udder of an infected cow and inserted this into the skin on the arm of his wife and two sons.

When Jenner was rewarded for his 'discovery' by parliament in 1802, officers of The Original Vaccine Pock Institution invited Jesty to London. They questioned him before infecting his son Robert with live smallpox again to prove he was immune. They considered the farmer worthy of recognition and in 1805 commissioned Sharp to paint his portrait in oils.

After leaving Dorset in 1934 the portrait was believed lost until it was discovered by researcher Patrick Pead in a South African farmhouse in 2005. Brought back to England by the Wellcome Trust, with the help of Patrick Pead and the Jesty family it has been borrowed by Dorset County Museum to mark the 30th anniversary of the eradication of smallpox – a global story that had its beginnings in Dorset.

Benjamin Jesty – Dorset's Vaccination Pioneer is on display in the Victorian Hall until 26 March 2010. An accompanying booklet is available in the Museum Shop priced £3.40

Reynolds Stone Centenary Exhibition

To mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Reynolds Stone a small display of his artworks, engravings, models and tools was created in the foyer of Dorset County Museum.

An artist of international importance, visitors throughout the summer have been surprised to discover that iconic works – such as the engraving on the front of the British Passport and the banner of The Times Newspaper – were created in Dorset. In June we were privileged to be visited by Reynolds' daughter Emma Beck who came down in a special visit from London to preview the exhibition.

Although the exhibition has now ended, a handful of the special limited edition *Reynolds Stone Centenary* booklets produced by his son, renowned printer Humphrey Stone, are still available to buy in the Museum Shop priced £10.



Field Meetings

During, 2009 the Society has held many field meetings often supporting the special interest groups within the Society. Three years ago, a Dorset Flora Group was formed with a number of objectives including introducing people to plants of all kinds, surveying sites for botanical interest and searching for populations of rare and scarce species. This latter activity supports a Botanical Society of Great Britain project.

For 2010, BSBI has issued a list of ten species. Many of these do not involve Dorset, but we need to collect up to date information on six species:

<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i>	Corn Marigold	<i>Mellittis melissophyllum</i>	Bastard Balm
<i>Hordeum marinum</i>	Sea Barley	<i>Viola lactea</i>	Pale Dog-violet
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Juniper	<i>Herminium monorchis</i>	Musk Orchid

The information required is fairly simple. The date, place, national grid reference (to best resolution), the name and address of the finder and if possible information as to whether the site may be visited or to whom permission to visit should be addressed. Field meetings are being organised to support this initiative.

In addition, we were unable to complete the survey for Frog Orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*) in 2009. Email contact through Dorset Environmental Records Centre c.a.steele@dorsetcc.gov.uk or on paper DERC, Library HQ, Colliton Park, Dorchester DT1 1XJ marked Threatened Plants Project.

John Newbould

Courtyard Capers

Over the summer, museum technician Brian Welch has been working hard to make the courtyard at Dorset County Museum safe for visitors to use again. All of the bricks that pave the area have had to be lifted and re-laid in order to be sure that it is safe underfoot.

This work is now complete and as soon as spring has sprung the courtyard will be open to enable visitors and café users to sit outside, and to provide a space where visiting groups of school children can eat their picnic lunches.

We would like to thank the management and staff of *Build Center*, Dorchester for their help and assistance with this project and for very generously providing the necessary building materials free of charge.

Don't Forget ...

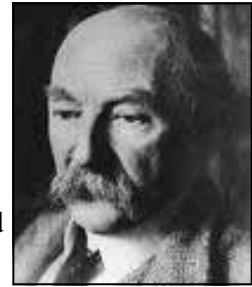
New Hardy Players present: Dorset Voices

Saturday 19th December at 7.30 pm. A feast of Dorset Voices from Thomas Hardy and William Barnes to new work written by the group. With music, song and dance.

Tickets £10 (includes a glass of wine and a mince pie) available from Museum Reception.

Thomas Hardy Collection

In May we invited in a conservation and storage expert for advice on how to make improvements to the way the collection in the Old Study is housed and handled. Included among a long list of proposals was the strong recommendation that all non-paper items should be moved elsewhere to free up much needed space for proper storage and a work-station. We are confident that important improvements can be made in the months to come and ultimately that the Old Study collection can be moved to a more suitable environment.



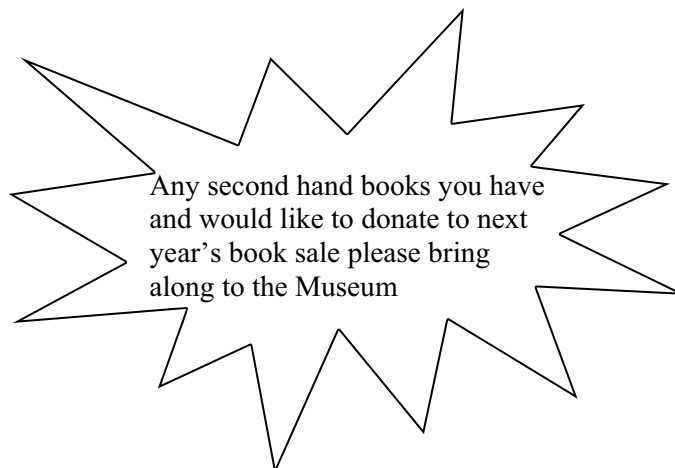
As part of these developments, the Thomas Hardy Society has very generously agreed to buy a work-station for exclusive use on the TH collection. This will enable us to begin a digital catalogue, with internet connection to follow so that the collection is opened up to a wider following. In addition, Exeter University Department of English is also interested in cooperation and has applied for funding for a post-graduate student to help catalogue the collection as part of a PhD thesis. We also recently visited the British Library for advice on a cataloguing system for a large literary collection and useful contacts were made.

In the summer the British Library approached the museum with a view to including the TH collection in its Literature in Context initiative, which will provide learning packs for school visits to the museum. This project is still under discussion. Later in the year the British Library again contacted the museum for help in imposing a bar on the export of certain Hardy Players typescripts; detailed information on similar material in our collection was provided and a temporary bar has been enforced.

A new display on TH and the Hardy Players includes the recently acquired model theatre. We had an interesting visit from Roger Evans, the grandson of AH Evans who was a central figure in the Hardy Players productions, and are grateful to Revd Dr John Travell for his continuing advice and support on this aspect of the collection.

Meanwhile enquiries both academic and lay continued to take up much of our time, notably Professor Millgate's researches into TH's correspondence and Kate and Mary Hardy's teaching careers. Photographs were requested by a number of people, including Claire Tomalin's American publisher to illustrate a collection of poetry. Dr Marianne Tidcombe gathered information on the bound manuscripts of Hardy's books of verse by the notable Arts & Crafts bookbinder, Katharine Adams. Dr Fred Reid is inquiring into Hardy's reading as a young man. Dr Alison Katz examined annotations to Hardy's bibles as part of her research into his religious beliefs. Other interest ranged from dramatisations of novels, photographs for a new introduction to Hardy's works, and most recently, material relating to Thomas Hardy's funeral, which involved three services, two in Dorset and one in Westminster. Then, as now, Hardy remains a pre-eminent literary figure.

Helen Gibson and Jasmine Metcalfe





**DORSET NATURAL HISTORY AND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**
High West Street, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XA

Monograph 19
EXCAVATIONS AT BESTWALL QUARRY, WAREHAM 1992-2005
Volume 1: THE PREHISTORIC LANDSCAPE



By Lilian Ladle and Ann Woodward

Long-term excavation over 55 hectares has led to the discovery of a rich sequence of prehistoric activity: Mesolithic evidence, an enigmatic Neolithic monument, Beaker pits, two phases of earlier Bronze Age field systems, and a whole series of Middle and Late Bronze Age settlement locations. There was exceptional evidence of prehistoric craft production, and radiocarbon dating (151 determinations) has led to the correlation of the different site phases with land use changes documented by pollen evidence from a deep peat deposit, and from charcoal and charred plant remains.

The project was 'a story of triumph in the face of disaster' and the report is an 'exceptional achievement, for Bestwall Quarry seems destined to take its place as a type site alongside the better known monuments of Wessex' (Richard Bradley)

Price £29 excluding post and packing or £35 including post and packing, available from:

Dorset County Museum, High West Street, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XA



ORDER FORM

I enclose a cheque formade payable to Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society (and a stamped addressed envelope) to cover the cost ofcopy/copies of Excavations at Bestwall Quarry, Volume 1

NAME

ADDRESS

EMAIL: secretary@dorsetcountymuseum.org

PHONE: (01305) 262735