



THE CHRISTCHURCH ANTIQUARIANS

Newsletter, March 2013

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Roger Donne

When TCA was founded in 2002, one of the projects initiated at the time was the Historical Research Project aimed at the survey of all published State Papers to extract and catalogue references to Christchurch. This project survived the many upheavals in our organisation in the early days and this year has been brought to a conclusion by two of TCA's founder members, David Eels and Ray Baxter. David Eels has contributed an article to this newsletter describing the project and we congratulate and thank David and Ray, together with other members, past and present, who assisted at various times, in bringing this mammoth task to a successful end.

Mike Tizzard has provided an update to our excavation project at Little Millhams to define the extent and form of Port Mill, the lost mill of Christchurch. In 2012, TCA commissioned a tree-ring dating analysis of timbers found on site and we now have an extremely accurate date for the felling of these timbers, consistent with other dating methods and the finds in context.

In 2012, we were invited to provide a stall at the Red House 'Festival of Archaeology' Day event and later in the year, in October, at the St. Faith's Fair Event.

I must apologise for the late appearance of the newsletter – if any kind member would like to take over the editorial task I would be very pleased! However, I hope you find the contents interesting and worth waiting for. If you are reading this and are not a member perhaps you would consider joining, to support our work? Contact details are at the end of the newsletter. We welcome and appreciate the support from our membership, both practically and financially. Our sole means of funding is via our membership subscriptions and the sale of our publications but outgoings can be expensive with, for example, the dating of a single sample of material by radio-carbon analysis costing us £250.

TCA'S HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

David Eels & Ray Baxter

We were both sorry to have to cancel our presentation about TCA's historical research due to be given at the AGM in June 2012 as David had not recovered sufficiently from his last session of hospital treatment. However, we did give it in September but as so few members attended, this article will inform the membership of what has been going on behind the scenes in the last few years and indicate the enormous amount of information that is available in the Hartley Library at Southampton University.

In the spring of 2003, as part of our Christchurch Castle project, a research team was set up to search for references to the castle in the various Chancery Rolls and other state papers available in printed form which fill several shelves in the Hartley Library. The research team was led by Ray Baxter under the guidance of David Eels who had been using the library's historical resources for several years and was familiar with many of these

rolls. The other members of the research team were Sue Ellis, Charlie Haddon and Sarah Williams to whom we express our gratitude.

At an early meeting of the research team it was proposed to extend the team's remit and record every mention of Christchurch found in each volume. David pointed out that this would be major task judging by the number of entries he had found during the work he had done already on the documents of the reigns of Henry III, Edward I and part of Edward II, but the enthusiasm of the rest of the team prevailed. The final count of about 700 documents greatly exceeded David's predictions and partly explains why it has taken so long to complete the cataloguing. The majority of the documents are printed in calendared form (an abbreviated translation) and vary in length from two or three lines to several pages, but, unfortunately, three sets of volumes are printed in Latin.

The cataloguing of all these references has been a long and time-consuming task which has been undertaken by Ray and David. Proof reading has been done by David with all the typing carried out by Ray. This has involved many visits and numerous telephone calls to each other as well as exchanging summaries and drafts for checking and re-drafting, and later on for proof reading. This work also required many return visits to the library to obtain missing details.

In our catalogue each document has been summarised, but the length of many of these has prevented the listing of all details. It was decided that it was not the job of those compiling the catalogue to interpret the content of the documents so proper nouns and dates usually appear as printed.

We produced one catalogue for each set of documents which means that we ended up with twenty separate catalogues. The paper version of these catalogues consists of 132 pages of A4 with individual catalogues varying in length from one page to 38 pages. For ease of access, therefore, Ray has had these twenty catalogue files put together on one disc and each file will be able to be accessed separately straight from the contents page.

It should be noted that the cost of the original research and the subsequent cataloguing, including travel, postage, photocopying and stationery, has been funded by the individuals concerned and not one penny has come from the funds The Christchurch Antiquarians.

CONTINUING EXCAVATIONS AT LITTLE MILLHAMS

Roger Donne & Mike Tizzard

During 2012, we continued with the excavations at Little Millhams to reveal more of the ground plan of the mill and the associated water management structures. Our digging season extended from April until October 2012 when we continued to put in test pits in the gardens. Unfortunately we are limited in the extent of the area which we can open up at any one time because of the modern structures which appear to lie directly over the mill site. A garden wall, a brick lean-to stable, a greenhouse and concrete paths are obstacles which have to be negotiated in the placement of test pits.

Nevertheless we have managed to find a further massive beam at a depth of approximately 1.5m with large worked mortise joints. There does not appear to be any rubble or debris from demolition on the site, and we conclude that the mill superstructure was largely taken down and removed, leaving only those parts which were too heavy or too difficult to remove. Some of the joints show evidence of damage which could have been caused when the vertical timbers which they housed were wrenched from the joint. From the discoveries made in 2012, we estimate that the overall dimensions of the mill were approximately 4m by 10m including the tailrace. The western side of the channel that the mill was positioned in was established when we found what seems to be a long part-cut log with stones piled up behind it.

Most of the beams we have found have been cross beams (running approximately east-west) but this year for the first time we have found a side beam on the north-east side of the structure, measuring some 0.36m wide and 0.29m deep. We have not yet established the length of this beam. What was also interesting was that it was still jointed into the end of the most northern (or upstream) cross beam yet discovered with what is apparently called a 'half dovetail mortise joint with wedge', with the small wedge holding the joint together still in situ.

There were two other empty mortise slots at the end of this cross beam, one on top for a vertical timber, presumably for part of the superstructure, and another wider slot (425mm wide and approximately 110mm deep). This slot appears to line up exactly with the open stepped joint of the first large beam we found in 2011. It would appear that the two cross beams were once connected by a large thick plank (10mm deep by 40mm wide) as opposed to

a large square beam. This makes for a rather unusual arrangement and will need some further research to explain it.

It now seems fairly certain that the large beam we first found in 2011 is a key feature of the mill structure. Not only is it bigger than all the others but the features found on it (mentioned in previous newsletters), indicate that it was once part of the support for the mill mechanism.

While investigating the side and jointed cross beam, we uncovered more of the revetment to a former waterway on the east side. This was similar to before with a number of water-worn stakes; interwoven between the stakes were twigs, reeds and small branches, making a barrier. Behind the revetment there was a thick layer of black material which on examination turned out to be a mixture of sandy silt with a great deal of charcoal and ash, together with fish bones and other animal bones which appeared to have been boiled. This looked to have been domestic refuse from a fire, perhaps from a house which borough records indicate was close by.

Further small finds were made, mainly pottery and animal bone including an almost complete section of a rather nice unglazed jug



Careful sieving by the TCA team reveals finds at Little Millhams

decorated with diagonal lines of red ochre. There were also some further metal items, mainly iron nails and part of an iron hinge and some copper alloy items, a small ring and some fittings.

There were two unusual finds of inlaid medieval floor tiles, a small triangular one with a daisy pattern and a fragment of a larger one with two standing lions.

It is unlikely that these high-status items came from the mill but were possibly brought in as rubble from the Priory after repairs there. Chips of Purbeck marble and stone were also found.

In 2012 we did receive a very significant dating result. In 2011, we took a sample from the end of the first large oak beam which we discovered; in

early 2012, we sent the sample for dendrochronology (tree-ring) analysis to Tree-Ring Services at Hungerford in Berkshire. The analysis involves the preparation of the sample by sanding with progressively finer grits to reveal the tree-ring sequence. The relative widths of the tree-rings are then measured under a microscope to estimate the climatic conditions for each year of the tree's life; this is then matched with a known tree-ring sequence to determine the period during which the tree was growing. Because we were able to provide a sample with a large number of rings (144) which included 34 sapwood rings together with a winter bark surface, it was possible to deduce a very accurate felling date, namely Winter AD 1282. This date is consistent with the dateable finds we have found in layers above the beams and furthermore is very interesting historically in that written evidence records the transfer of Port Mill from the abbot of Quarr Abbey (on the Isle of Wight) to the prior of Christchurch in 1283. It is possible to conjecture that this event brought about some reconstruction or refurbishment of the mill at around this date.

The timbers lie beneath a layer of water-borne gravel and silt and it is in this layer that the majority of finds come to light. Careful sieving of the silt is necessary in order to recover finds such as small items of metal, like nails, or various small pieces of water-worn pottery. We now have a collection of finds which we have to process and record. Our first finds recording session was held in January 2012, in which we established a procedure for dealing with the site.

We remain, of course, very grateful to Mrs Diana Aldridge and her family for their interest in our work and for allowing us to excavate within the Millhams Meade gardens, as well as being very tolerant of our spoil heaps!

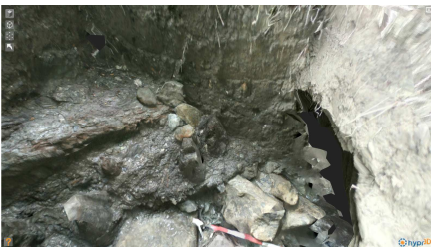
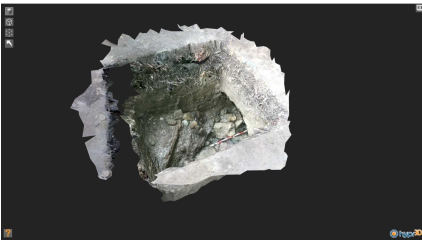
THREE-DIMENSIONAL MODELLING – A NEW WAY OF RECORDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

Roger Donne

In September 2012, member Mike Gill from Salisbury introduced us to a remarkable new way of recording archaeological features which shows great potential as a replacement or enhancement of the photographic record or paper and pencil recording. Of course, we always use photography to record features of an excavation, but this new technique involves the use of special computer software to construct three-dimensional models from a

series of photographs. The model can then be used as a record of the feature and can even be used to make measurements.

Mike was with us during our excavation of Pit 26 at Little Millhams and we were perplexed as we watched him take a number of photographs – 18 in number as it turned out – completely around Pit 26. Pit 26 had exposed part of the revetment assumed to have lain along a former edge of the Mill Stream which we had previously found slightly further north. It was also directly adjacent to a concrete path which we had undercut slightly in order to reveal the relationship between the revetment and one of the remaining structural timbers of the mill which lay under the path.



A sequence of photographs from Mike Gill's 3D model

The next part of the procedure involved submitting the series of photographs to a website 'Hypr3D' (which now seems to be in the process of rebranding itself as 'Cubify Capture'). After all the photographs have been uploaded, clever software on the site processes the series and identifies common points in successive photographs. The differing aspects of each photograph then allow the software to work out the spatial relationships between features and so construct a three-dimensional model. Viewing software on the site allows the model to be rotated in any axis and one can zoom in on the model to examine parts in detail – of course the completeness of the original series of photographs determines if there are any holes in the reconstructed model. Once the model has been constructed it is possible to download the

computer files and process them in software on one's own computer. If the photographs include points of references for measurements, such as a scale

or pegs in the ground at known spacing, it is possible to calibrate the model. This allows measurements to be taken from the model in any of the three dimensions, although it would be necessary to carry out some experiments to gain confidence in the reliance which could be placed on such measurements.

The sequence of photographs on the previous page show various views of Mike Gill's three-dimensional model which can be viewed in the gallery of the Hypr3D site at the internet address www.hypr3d.com – just click on 'Gallery', search for 'Gill' and open up Mike Gill's 'Excavation' model. The pictures on the previous page cannot give a true flavour of the remarkable flexibility and realism achieved in viewing the 3D model on a computer.

Of course, the technique is not confined to archaeology and the gallery on the website contains a number of other experiments – some more successful than others – showing models of buildings and everyday objects. And by following the simple instructions, you can even have a go yourself at producing your own model!

THE FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY EVENT AT THE RED HOUSE

Roger Donne

Early in 2012, we were invited by Paul Willis, then manager of the Red House Museum, to be present at the Red House Festival of Archaeology Day on Thursday 26 July 2012 - though Paul had departed for greener pastures by the time this event took place. The Festival of Archaeology is an annual event organised by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) and various affiliated organisations are invited to put on an event to celebrate the breadth of archaeological work in Britain. TCA is not able to welcome large numbers of people to our Little Millhams excavation in a private garden but we were pleased to have the opportunity to show off our project and to publicise our society at the Red House.

We were able to set up our stall in the marquee in the beautiful gardens of the Red House but luckily cover from the elements was not required since we had a fine sunny day. We were joined in the marquee by a representative from the Hampshire Museums Service, hosting activities for younger people as well as the Portable Antiquities Scheme representative from Dorset. Unfortunately we did not receive many visitors to our stall,

possibly because it took place on a weekday, but the stallholders passed a very pleasant day in the gardens.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Adrian Tattersfield

Our membership has remained quite stable in the last year. TCA currently has 27 paid-up members, and we have lost some and gained some. What we would like is more active members to help with projects in hand, and anyone with any specialist knowledge or field of interest.

We would also welcome comments from members on how we perform as a group and whether we should expand our field of activities. We have limited financial resources and it can be hard to consider stretching ourselves much wider. We lost one member because he felt that we were concentrating too much on mediaeval history and not on prehistory, which was his particular field of interest.

If you would like to be more active in the direction of the society, the Secretary would be pleased to hear from you. Elections to the committee are held every June at the AGM. Following the resignation of a committee member in the latter half of 2012, we have continued with a committee one under strength. If you would like to serve, or would welcome a change from the 'old guard', please come forward!

Just a little plea regarding subscriptions - it would be helpful if members could pay for their membership as soon as possible on or after the 1st June when we issue the subscription reminders. We have to pay out numerous sums, most particularly insurances, to cover us at digs, and which are generally becoming quite onerous. We must pay these sums to protect you, our members, when in the field, and can be draining on our funds unless we get monies in.

TCA thank you for your support, but some years there have been one or two who have let it lapse. Please talk to friends and/or acquaintances and get them interested in our operations and come and join us. There is a lot out there waiting to be found!

ST. FAITH'S MEDIEVAL FAIR COMMEMORATION

Roger Donne

We were back in the Red House Garden setting up our stall to support

the event commemorating the medieval St Faiths Fair, which in 2012 was held on Saturday 6 October, which was actually St. Faith's Day. This event is organised almost single-handed by Stephanie Liney, who is also one of TCA's members. In previous years, this event had been confined to Place Mill and the grass area outside the Mill on the quay. In 2012, Stephanie was invited to set up a second venue in the gardens of the Red House. As is customary with this event, dressing up in an approximation of medieval garb was *de rigueur*, both Chairman and Secretary were suitably decked out, and in the October chill the extra layer of clothing was quite welcome. We had a number of interested visitors to our stall which hosted a display of artefacts from the Millhams Meade excavations and provided an overview of our activities. We were pleased that some of the interested enquiries later translated into membership applications.

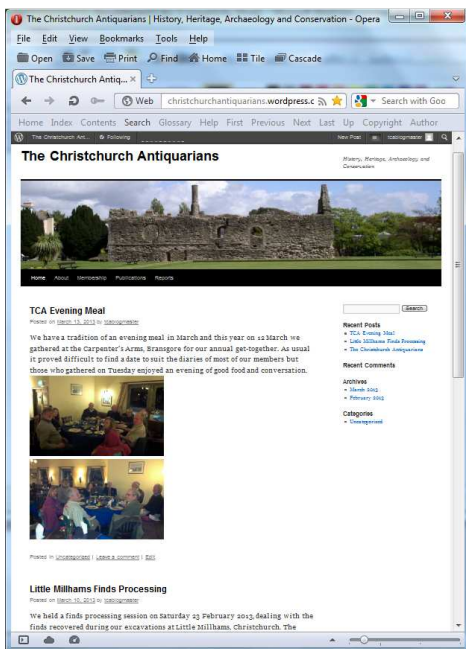
BLOGS AND THINGS

Roger Donne

Several people have mentioned that our TCA website has been getting

rather out of date. I must admit that I have found it difficult to maintain and, while we are grateful to 'CommuniGate' for providing us with free webspace, the prescribed format for the pages and the website layout does appear to be very limited. One example of this is that the menu on the left hand side of the webpages is constructed in the order in which webpages were produced. Unfortunately, this means that the oldest pages appear first, with the consequence that everything appears very dated.

In order to combat this, I have produced a TCA 'blog', which can be found at



Home page of our blog as it appears in a web browser

<http://christchurchantiquarians.wordpress.com> - thanks to Mike Gill, who has produced something similar for the Avon Valley Archaeological Society, for the suggestion and guidance. One advantage of the blog, which will also include some static pages, is that the latest news of our activities will appear on the home page and be immediately visible. At the same time, there will be links to the former TCA website which will be maintained with our contact details and other reports of past events. The blog is hosted free of charge by the 'Wordpress' organisation although various customisations can be purchased. If you have any comments on the blog, or if you would like to become a blog author, please let me know.

While on the subject of the internet, may I remind those members who have an email address to register it as part of their membership details? Often our excavation and other practical activities are governed by the weather or other last-minute concerns and Mike Tizzard is only able to give short notice of our intentions by email.

BOOKSHELF

A Walk Along Convent Walk – A New History Walk Booklet by Phil Tate

Are you looking for a way to spend a pleasant hour or so in Christchurch? My first booklet as an independent researcher and writer, a guidebook entitled A Walk Along Convent Walk, might provide an entertaining solution. The booklet was adapted from a series of articles I wrote for the local Christchurch Eye community magazine in 2011 to commemorate the centenary of the footpath, which was opened in 1911 as part of the town's coronation celebrations for King George V and Queen Mary. Alongside the more established facts I've presented some less well-known snippets, and a few speculations, about the notable historic features to be seen on a stroll beside the millstream between Castle Street and the Quay – with the contributions made by TCA mentioned where appropriate.

It was my distinct preference that a book promoting the heritage of Christchurch should actually be printed in Christchurch (and I cannot deny that the internet placed economic temptation in my path), so I must compliment the helpfulness of Xadon Limited, located in Reid Street off the Fairmile, for enabling me to achieve this aim. I'm obviously most grateful to Christchurch Eye editor Cheryl Dennett for having given the opportunity to celebrate our splendid Convent Walk through the Local History articles, and I would also like to thank Sara Stewart-Haddow and her team at the

Christchurch Information Centre for their support and encouragement.

A Walk Along Convent Walk is available from Christchurch Information Centre, the Red House Museum, Priory Gift Shop, and The History Shop - priced at only £3.50!

'A nice piece of work, beautifully printed in colour!! Recommended.' – Peter Dryden, Poole.'

Phil Tate

The Medieval Markets and Fairs of Christchurch by David Eels

Just a reminder that TCA's long-standing publication by David Eels is still available and continues to enjoy steady sales. This booklet was originally produced by David to celebrate the 750th anniversary in October 2008 of the first St. Faith's Fair and can be found on sale at local outlets in Christchurch. Each TCA member is entitled to a copy at a concession price; if you are a member and haven't yet obtained your concessionary copy, please contact the Secretary.

Roger Donne

TCA CONTACT DETAILS

If you would like to know more about The Christchurch Antiquarians or about any of the articles in this newsletter, please contact either the Chairman or the Secretary, as below.

Chairman	Secretary
Mike Tizzard 61 Jumpers Road Christchurch BH23 2JS Tel: 01202 476242 email: m.tizzard@ntlworld.com	Roger Donne 15 Barnfield Christchurch BH23 4QY Tel: 01425 273333 email: tca@donne.free-online.co.uk

If you would like to join TCA, please contact our Membership Secretary, Adrian Tattersfield, 5 Greenwoods, off Newlands Road, New Milton, Hants BH25 6PS Tel: 01425 615578

TCA website: www.communiGate.co.uk/dorset/xchurchantiquarians

TCA blog: <http://christchurchantiquarians.wordpress.com>

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