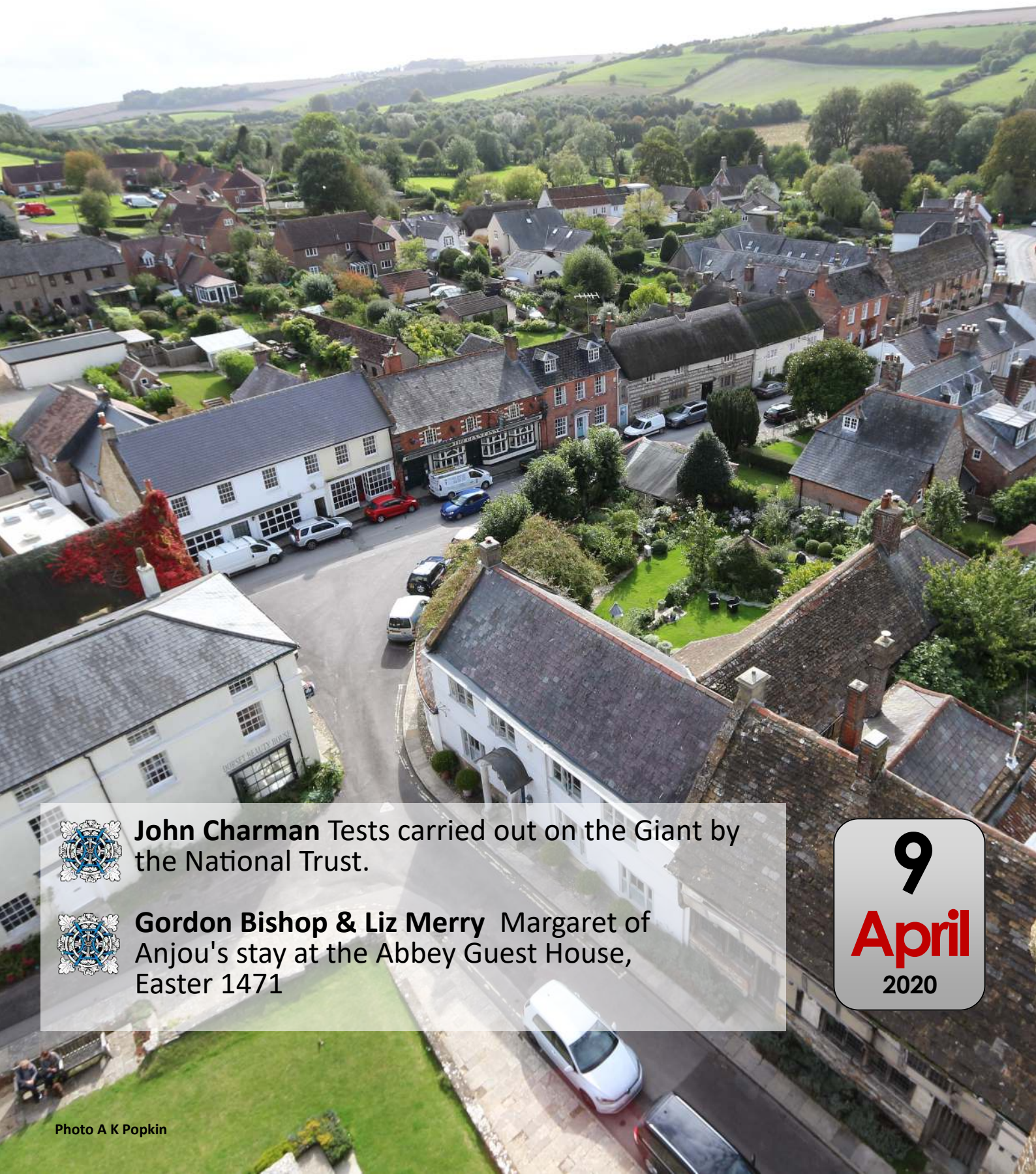




Cerne
Historical
Society

MAGAZINE

Welcome to the first issue of the Cerne Historical Society's Magazine.



John Charman Tests carried out on the Giant by the National Trust.



Gordon Bishop & Liz Merry Margaret of Anjou's stay at the Abbey Guest House, Easter 1471

9

April

2020



Welcome to the first issue of the Cerne Historical Society's Magazine.

Although the Coronavirus Epidemic has resulted in the cancellation of the Society's meetings and talks for the next few months and the planned visit to the Larmer Tree Gardens in May, the CHS Committee feels that it should not allow it to prevent all activities on our part. We are inspired by the fact that Shakespeare wrote King Lear while theatres were closed due to disease, Isaac Newton developed the theories of gravity and motion whilst working at home during the Great Plague of 1665 and Samuel Pepys continued to write his diary during the same period.

We have therefore decided to produce an online magazine about the history of Dorset and in particular Cerne Abbas and the surrounding area. Whilst we do not seek to emulate Shakespeare, Newton and Pepys's achievements we do hope to provide some articles that will interest, inform and entertain during the coming months of self-isolation.

This first issue is mainly about the recent tests the National Trust has carried out on the Giant in the hope of discovering his age although it also includes articles about the visit of Margaret of Anjou, the wife of Henry VI, and their son Edward to Cerne Abbey at Easter 1471. We hope to publish further issues of the magazine about every four weeks.

Although the magazine will primarily be published online to members of the Society we will produce a few hard copies for those who do not have access to the internet. Also, we will put it onto our website (cerneabbashistory.org), we will place a link to the magazine on the Cerne Valley Portal and we will email it to anyone who lets our Treasurer, John Chalker (john.chalker@ymail.com), know that they would like to receive it when it is published.

We would be very grateful if you would let us know what you think of the magazine and whether you would like us to publish further issues and, if so, what subjects you would like our articles to cover and any other suggestions you may have regarding the contents. Please send your comments and suggestions to gordonwbishop@gmail.com.

I would like to thank all the Committee for their help in producing this issue and in particular Andrew Popkin for his magnificent artwork.

Please keep safe and well during this very difficult time.

Gordon Bishop - Chair of the Cerne Historical Society

Archive Photo: Cerne Abbas Home Guard : WWII





National Trust Excavations



Introduction to the dating work by Mike Clark

Between the 16th and 20th March 2020 a team of scientists under the leadership of the National Trust's archaeologist Martin Papworth carried out excavations and obtained core samples for OSL* testing of the Giant to try to discover his age. The results are due to be announced later this summer. The NT also planned to use a drone to carry out an aerial survey of the Giant the following week but that had to be abandoned because of the lock-down.

A number of members of the CHS Committee visited the site during that week, including John Charman, who as most of you will know is a Chartered Geologist. Many will have heard the talk he gave a couple of years ago to the Historical Society on the underlying geology and landscape features of the Cerne Valley which led to our village being located where it is. After his site visit John wrote a report which follows. The aerial photo at the beginning of the report I recognise from his fascinating talk. John was able to meet with Martin Papworth to discuss the NT's project and has sent him a copy of his report. John's article helps us to understand the topography of Giant Hill and he cautions us not to become too excited as to what the results will tell us about the Giant's age.

*See p4



Mike Clark intro continued.

One of the techniques the NT is using, Optical Stimulated Luminescence Dating (OSL) was first developed in the 1990s and is briefly described by John Charman at the beginning of his report. It was used in 1995 to date the Uffington White Horse which was revealed to date from the Bronze Age between 1200 and 800 BC, which is much older than originally thought. Will the OSL technique prove to be a measure of the age of the Cerne Giant, thus laying to rest some of the theories as to his age and purpose and no doubt giving rise to others?



National Trust Excavations

Report on a Brief Inspection of Excavations on the Cerne Giant

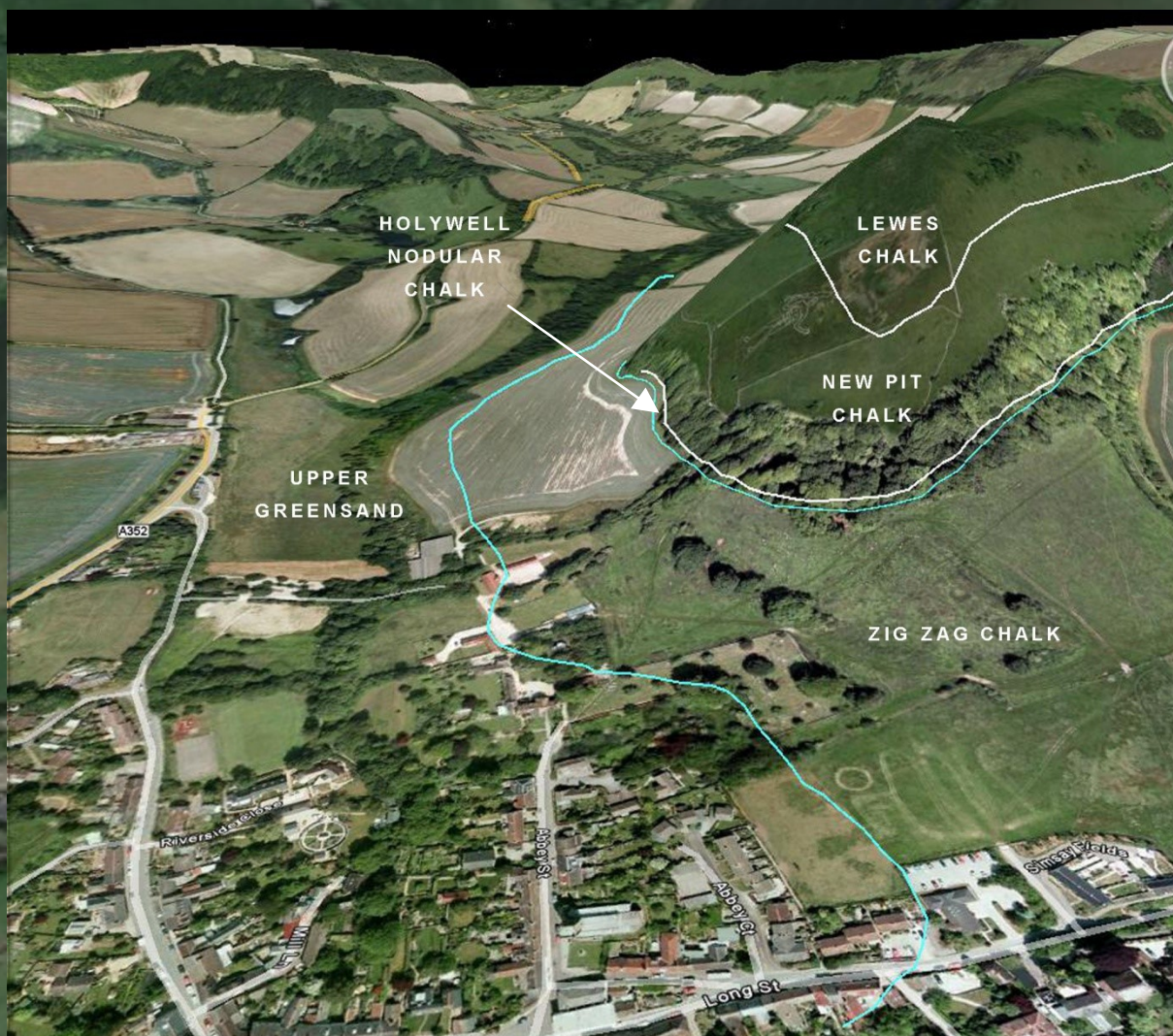
John Charman 18 March 2020

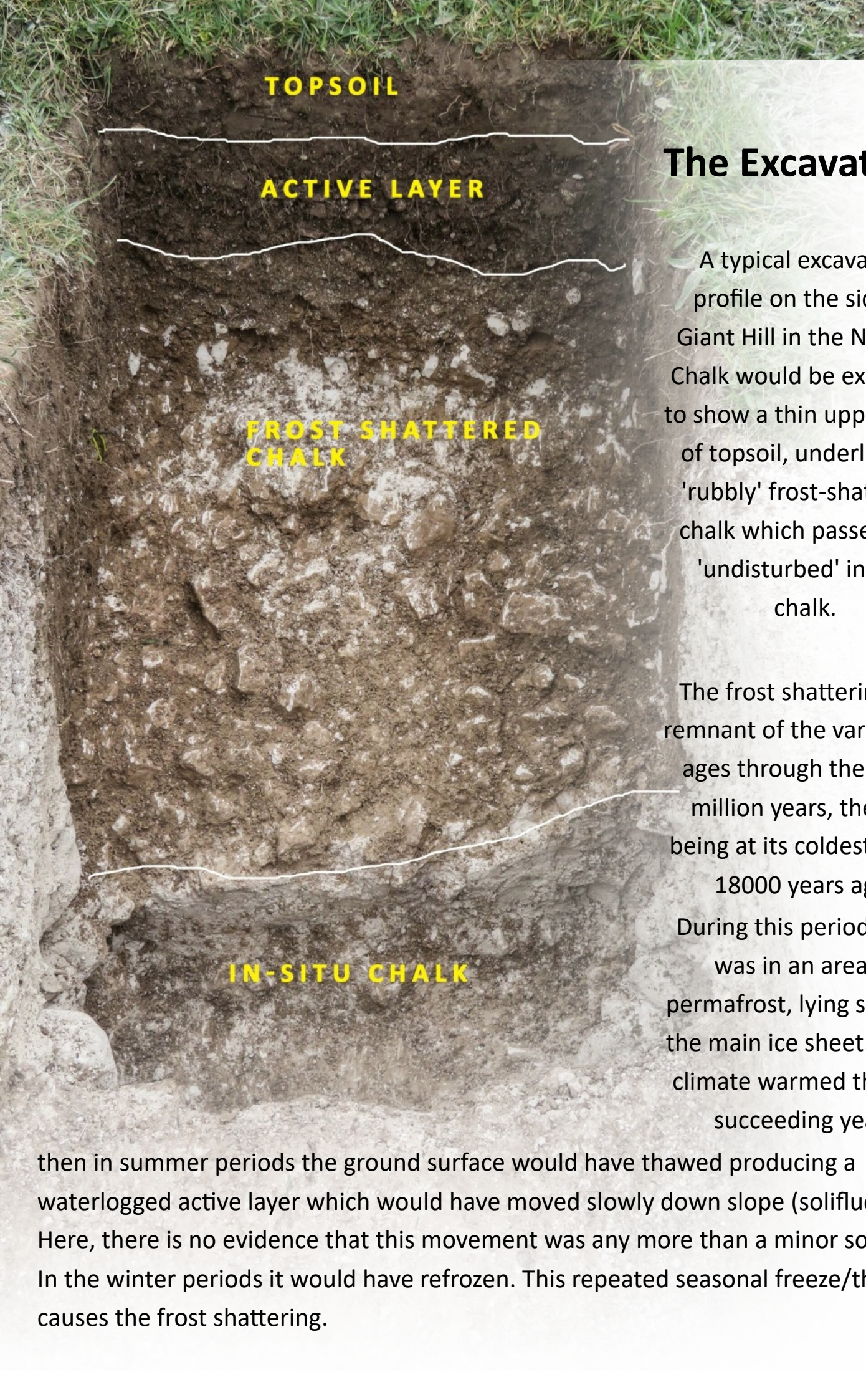
The National Trust have dug 4 excavations at locations on the Giant to assist in an investigation of the nature and history of the re-chalking and the figure. Samples are to be taken for testing using Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL).

OSL is a technique used to date fossils and minerals in geological sediments using ionised radiation to determine the last time a mineral was exposed to sunlight.

The Local Geology of the Cerne Valley

The Giant is formed in the New Pit Chalk formation of the Middle Chalk, a white blocky chalk with relatively few flints. It is overlain further up the hill by the Lewes Chalk formation, a white blocky chalk with numerous flints occurring in layers or as more continuous bands. It is underlain by the Holywell Nodular Chalk, a layer of strong greyish chalk interbedded with marl bands. This marks the break of slope at the base of Giant Hill and also, being relatively impermeable, marks a spring line.





TOPSOIL

ACTIVE LAYER

**FROST SHATTERED
CHALK**

IN-SITU CHALK

The Excavations

A typical excavation profile on the side of Giant Hill in the New Pit Chalk would be expected to show a thin upper layer of topsoil, underlain by 'rubbly' frost-shattered chalk which passes into 'undisturbed' in-situ chalk.

The frost shattering is a remnant of the various ice ages through the last 2 million years, the last being at its coldest about 18000 years ago.

During this period Cerne was in an area of permafrost, lying south of the main ice sheet. As the climate warmed through succeeding years

then in summer periods the ground surface would have thawed producing a waterlogged active layer which would have moved slowly down slope (solifluction). Here, there is no evidence that this movement was any more than a minor soil creep. In the winter periods it would have refrozen. This repeated seasonal freeze/thaw causes the frost shattering.



Near the Giant's left foot.

This clearly shows the trench excavated to form the Giant and for the rechalking and my interpretation of different rechalking phases of infill. Note the sloping downslope face (right) of the rechalked trench. I'm guessing that the easiest way to balance on the slope while doing the rechalking is by standing below the trench. This would make cutting out old chalk on a generally vertical upslope face (left) easier than on the downslope face (right). I could imagine using a shovel or pick from below the trench would result in some damage/flattening which would progressively widen the trench from each earlier phase.

Near the Giant's left hand

In two excavations, wooden pegs are present which have been preserved at the base of the upslope face of the original trench. Were these part of the original digging which could indicate a younger age for the Giant since they could possibly last for a couple of hundred years but not considerably longer? Wouldn't it be great to date these?



John Charman



John Charman

This week 549 years ago



Gordon Bishop writes

On Easter Sunday the 14th April 1471 a small ship docked at Weymouth after a stormy crossing from Honfleur in Normandy. It was carrying Queen Margaret, wife of King Henry VI of England, and their 17 year old son Edward, the Lancastrian Prince of Wales.



Henry VI

Queen Margaret, better known as Margaret of Anjou, had been living with Edward in France since March 1461 when Henry VI 's forces were routed by the Yorkists at the Battle of Towton. Following the battle, which was “probably the largest and bloodiest



Margaret of Anjou and son Edward

le Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris

battle ever fought on English soil”, the Earl of Warwick deposed Henry, who was imprisoned, and put Edward IV, the leader of the Yorkists, on the throne.

In 1470 Edward IV quarrelled with the Earl of Warwick who deposed him and restored Henry. In early 1471 Margaret planned to return to England with her son, raise an army in the west of England, join forces with Warwick and defeat Edward IV and the Yorkist forces.



John Morton

Unfortunately for the Lancastrians bad weather in the Channel prevented Queen Margaret and Prince Edward from sailing to England until the middle of April. On the very day they arrived in England the Earl of Warwick's forces were defeated by Edward IV at the Battle of Barnet and Warwick himself was killed.

On her arrival in Weymouth Queen Margaret and Prince Edward were met by John Morton, a highly respected lawyer and cleric, who had supported the Lancastrian cause and spent several years with Queen Margaret in France after the Battle of Towton, but had returned to England having received a pardon from Edward IV in 1470.

Cerne Abbey
Guest House.

Photograph
© Robin Mills



Morton escorted Queen Margaret and Prince Edward to Cerne Abbey where they stayed in the Guest House for a number of days.

It was probably at Cerne Abbey that Margaret learnt of Warwick's defeat and death at Barnet.

John Morton knew Cerne Abbey well having been educated there as a boy before he went to Balliol College, Oxford. He had been born in 1420, the son of Richard Mor(e)ton of Milbourne St Andrew. His uncle, William Mor(e)ton, who was MP for Shaftesbury during the 1430s, lived in Cerne.

On hearing of the defeat at Barnet Queen Margaret wished to return to France but was persuaded by Prince Edward to proceed to raise an army in the west

John Talbot, 1st Earl of Shrewsbury, with his dog, presenting his richly illuminated manuscript made in Rouen in 1444/5, as a gift to Margaret of Anjou and Henry VI, in honour of their betrothal.



and confront Edward IV's forces. The armies met at the Battle of Tewkesbury on 4 May 1471. The Lancastrians were heavily defeated, Prince Edward was killed and Queen Margaret captured. Henry VI was again imprisoned in the Tower of London where he died on the night of 21 May, possibly murdered on the orders of Edward IV. Margaret was released after a ransom was paid by the French King Louis XI in 1475. She returned broken-hearted to France where she died on 25 August 1482 aged 52.

John Morton's career prospered after 1471. Edward IV was well aware of his ability and loyalty to a cause and appointed him Master of the Rolls in 1472, archdeacon in a number of dioceses between 1472 and 1478 and Bishop of Ely in August 1478. On Edward IV's death in 1483 Morton was imprisoned by Richard III first in the Tower and later Brecknock Castle from where he managed to escape. He joined Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, in Brittany, where he helped plan his invasion to oust Richard from the throne. The Yorkists were defeated and Richard killed at Bosworth on 22 August 1485.



As a reward for his loyalty Morton became Henry's most trusted adviser. He was appointed Lord Chancellor in March 1486 and enthroned as Archbishop of Canterbury in January 1487. He was also appointed a Cardinal in 1493 and Chancellor of Oxford University in 1495. He died aged 80 in September 1500 and was buried in Canterbury Cathedral.

As a matter of interest, one of our members, Andrew Popkin, is related by marriage to Margaret of Anjou, and by blood to Henry II.



This week
549
years ago

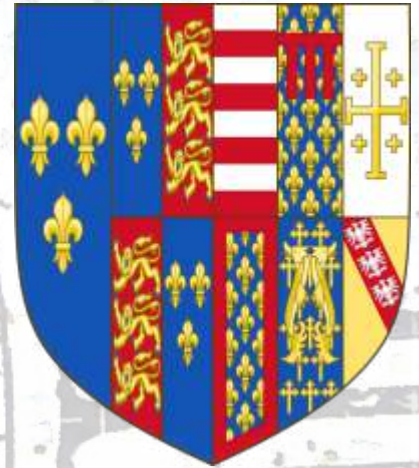


Elizabeth Merry writes

Margaret of Anjou – according to Shakespeare

'The she-wolf of France'; 'O! Tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide'; 'flinty, rough, remorseless'; 'Foul, wrinkled witch'

These are only a few of the epithets Shakespeare allows characters to hurl at Queen Margaret in his Henry VI plays and Richard III. This accomplished, attractive and intelligent girl, married at the age of 15 to King Henry VI of England, has, thanks to Shakespeare, been branded for posterity as a vicious virago. Aided by the undeniably chauvinistic and patriarchal outlook of much of the time between the Middle Ages and the present, Shakespeare's image of Margaret of Anjou is a compelling and memorable one, and anyone who knows anything about her will recognise at least one of the above descriptions.



Arms of Margaret of Anjou



A few years ago I gave a Shakespeare-themed party in the Village Hall; invitees were requested to come as a character from any of Shakespeare's plays. I, clad in mediaeval costume complete with crown and veil, displaying an escutcheon with the arms of Anjou, was Queen Margaret herself! After that I revisited the plays where she appears to find out whether Shakespeare gave us another side to the termagant people are so familiar with.

I'm glad to say that even in such testosterone fuelled tales of factionalism and warfare, power, perfidy and betrayal, Margaret emerges as a much more rounded character than the above insults indicate. She is unstinting in the defence of her son, Edward Prince of Wales, when his hapless father the King disinherits him by naming the ambitious and ruthless Duke of York as his heir. Leading her troops in the subsequent battle of Wakefield, she is lauded for her bravery and she triumphs, albeit briefly.



Marguerite d'Anjou 1430 - 1482

Later on, when things turn even more brutal and young Prince Edward is murdered after the battle of Tewkesbury, her anguish is palpable; she implores the Duke of Clarence to kill her too. That anguish manifests itself movingly in the subsequent play, Richard III, in a scene where she and the current queen, Elizabeth come together with the Duchess of York to mourn their murdered sons.

Vengeful, yes, ambitious, yes, bitter, yes – but she suffers appalling cruelty and fights her corner with courage and eloquence.

Another interesting fact: When Queen Margaret and Prince Edward visited Cerne Abbey in 1471 they were accompanied by John Morton. Morton makes a brief but significant appearance in Richard III as Bishop of Ely, at a meeting with Richard Duke of Gloucester and several of his henchmen. The ostensible purpose of this is to plan the coronation of King Edward IV. But when Gloucester arrives, he gets rid of Ely by sending him out with a request for some strawberries from his garden, then withdraws with Lord Hastings for a secret meeting – to plan the demise of the new king's young sons - the Princes in the Tower.....

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This week

549
years ago



Letters

As with any good magazine, we want you to have a page where you can have your say. Do you have anything to add to the articles, either to correct them if you think we have got something wrong or to add something that you think we should all know?

If you have any **photos or documents** which might be of interest to readers, please let us know and we may be able to turn them into an article for others to enjoy.

If you just have a question, we will try to provide an answer.

In fact, we will be pleased to hear from you on any subject that will increase a mutual understanding of our shared history.

**The Letters Page is YOUR page
so let the Letter Page editor hear from you.**

The next issue will be published in about four weeks time.

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