

# MAGAZINE

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



LONG STREET, CERNE ABBAS.

*Original Postcard courtesy of Sue Mansel*



**VE Day 1945** George Mortimer



**Joan Keeble** Tim, Robin and Pauline Mills



**Dating the Giant** Martin Papworth



**Letters** Chiefly, yourselves







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



Thank you to all those who have complimented us on the first issue of the magazine including members in the USA, Greece and New Zealand. Your comments are greatly appreciated and have encouraged us to produce this second issue on the 8<sup>th</sup> May, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day.

The first part of this issue, which has been written by George Mortimer, is dedicated to Cerne and the Second World War. The magazine also contains the first of a series of three delightful “memories” of Cerne by Joan Keeble who lived in the village with her family from the late 1960s to the 1990s; the other “memories” will be published in subsequent issues. Finally, Martin Papworth, the National Trust’s archaeologist, has written an article for us about what he and his fellow archaeologists found when they carried out excavations on the Giant in March. It was hoped that the results of laboratory tests to date samples they took could be announced in the middle of July. The testing has had to cease because of the coronavirus pandemic and at the moment it is not known when it will be possible to complete it.

Over the last few weeks we have learnt with great sadness of the death of three of our members, Clive Fox, Mick Markey and Sandy Morrell. They had been members for many years and will all be greatly missed.



WW II Child's Gas Mask

We are very grateful to Tommy Dunn for donating to the Society a Second World War child's size gas mask and a headlight blackout cover that he owned. It is very generous of him and greatly appreciated. We look forward to displaying them at one or more of our meetings when it becomes possible to hold them again. In the meantime photos of them are shown.



WW II Headlamp blackout mask

**Gordon Bishop**  
Chair of the Cerne Historical Society

Please send your comments and suggestions to [gordonwbishop@gmail.com](mailto:gordonwbishop@gmail.com)

This magazine may be viewed online at [cerneabbashistory.org](http://cerneabbashistory.org)



*"God bless you all. This is your victory! It is the victory of the cause of freedom in every land. In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this. Everyone, man or woman, has done their best. Everyone has tried. Neither the long years, nor the dangers, nor the fierce attacks of the enemy, have in any way weakened the unbending resolve of the British nation. God bless you all."*

Winston Churchill 8 May 1945

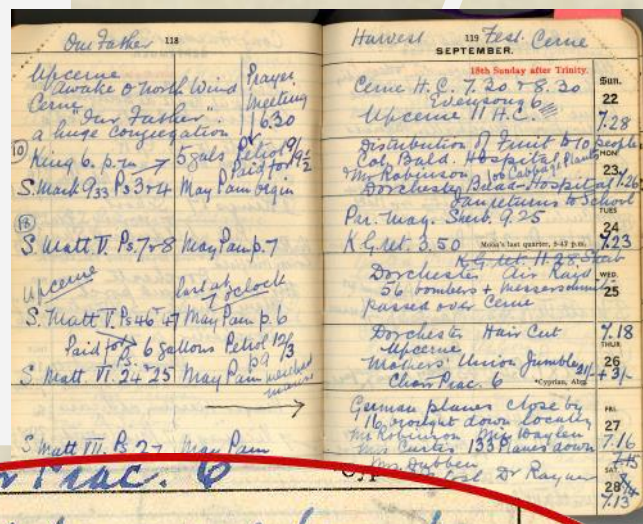


## George Mortimer

This second Historical Society magazine coincides with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the surrender of all German forces to the Allies, VE Day. The 8<sup>th</sup> of May this year had been declared a Bank Holiday, but now disrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic. However, in this article we can reflect on how Cerne Abbas was affected by the Second World War. By VE Day the war had already claimed the lives of 9 men from the Cerne Valley, with another 3 men to be added before Japan surrendered on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945, VJ Day. There were two pairs of brothers among them and the descendants of these, Peter Downton and Peter Harvey, still live in Cerne Abbas. The individual stories about the men who died can be found on the Society website.

War was announced by the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, at 11.15 on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939.

St Mary's Church was at Matins and the diary of the incumbent, Revd John Ray, records in his diary that he also announced it 'from the Pulpit'. The Revd Ray kept diaries during his incumbency, and for most of the war years



**Lady Digby on her milk round delivering to Mrs England at 'Raleighs'**

these have survived. Copies are held by the Historical Society. The diaries record major events during the war, but are interspersed by delightful, sometimes idiosyncratic, minutiae of personal and parish matters. There are descriptions of when the war directly intruded into village life, such as an entry for 4<sup>th</sup> July 1940 where he records *'Six bombs in Cerne' - 'Air Raid Warning'*. Again, for 27<sup>th</sup> September 1940, *'German planes close by, 16 brought down locally' - '133 Planes down'*. He also notes separately this day that he bought 6 gallons of petrol for 12s 3d (61 new pence). Happy days!



Betty Marsh, right, a young girl at the time, also reminisces : *'Cycling home to Minterne one day, I saw 150 German bombers flying overhead with 3 Spitfires attacking them. I hid in the bushes in Glove Farm and saw 3 German airmen coming down in parachutes. One had a broken leg and they all seemed happy to be captured. I went back in the dark and picked up bits of the German plane and handed them into the police station in Cerne'*. The bombs reported as being dropped in the Cerne Valley were almost certainly from German aircraft reducing unwanted weight as they tried to evade the RAF. Dave Fox says that one bomb crater close to the road to Dorchester can still be seen if you know where to look.

It is probable that the Giant provided a useful navigation marker as German aircraft flew north to bomb their targets. It is understood that the Giant was covered by brushwood during the war to camouflage it for this reason.



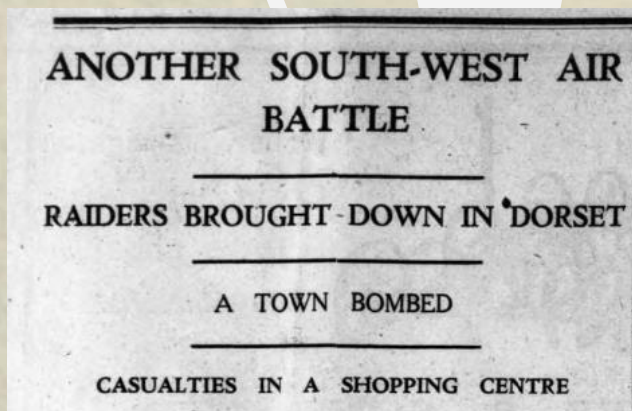
**Betty Marsh**



**Ian Denness reports:**

### **World War Two German Bomber, Crashed at Cerne Abbas, October 1940**

Extract from *Taunton Courier* 12 October 1940, page 8



Wartime reporting restrictions prevented the precise identification the 'village in the south' where the three German airmen were captured. But the description given on the right corresponds with some of the details included in the memories of Cerne Abbas based eyewitnesses and from later extracts from which are included below:

Raiders crossing the Dorset Coast were heavily engaged by fighters on Monday. German 'planes were brought down at Sydling, Cerne Abbas, Buckland Newton, Preston (Weymouth), Kingston Russell, Burton Bradstock and Corfe Castle. At the last place an Me. 110, set alight by the bullets of a British fighter during battle, crashed only 100 yards from Corfe Castle Police-station. Before the machine was completely enveloped in flames the pilot was saved and taken into the Police-station. His companion was dead. Another enemy 'plane, believed to be another Me. 110, was brought down on open heathland a mile outside Wareham.

### **GERMAN'S THANKS TO RESCUERS**

A German bomber was shot down and fell near a village in the South. The three airmen bailed out and landed close together in and near woods. The pilot officer was uninjured and surrendered. The second officer landed in a tree from which he was rescued. His wounds were dressed and bandaged. The third man was close by on the hillside, with multiple injuries. First aid was rendered, and the man was soon splinted and placed on a stretcher and taken away under police and military escort. The airman who fell into the tree expressed gratitude for the kindly treatment he had received.

**Testimonies documented in a Facebook thread in March 2020:**

[James Harries](#) I seem to remember Rodney Legg having a picture of a tail fin from a German plane he had found in woods near Cerne also I was told a few years back about a plane engine being buried in a pit at UpCerne that was said to have come from a German plane.



**Continued - testimonies documented in a Facebook thread in March 2020:**

[Mike Dunning](#) *Two planes collided over the woods on the Piddletrentide side of the Dorchester –Sherborne road during the battle of Britain --found radiator core and other wreckage there in the eighties.*

[Richard Cox](#) *When I was about 7, that would have been 1940 ish, time wise I really cannot be certain, it was so long ago, I was in the garden of my home at Mill Lane, Charminster, when I saw a plane dive out of the clouds towards the direction of Godmanstone, Cerne Abbas. I watched it dive until it went into a tail spin and disappeared shortly after which I heard a loud bang. All I can say about the plane is that it was a single engined fighter type. The reason I was watching the sky was because of the sounds of aircraft, there was obviously a dog fight going on somewhere to the south of where I was. Certainly the direction of travel corresponds with what I saw.*

[Andrew Ross](#) *I remember Betty Moore telling me about German air men being captured top of Cerne and marched down Piddle Lane, maybe they bailed out of stricken aircraft.*

[Malcolm Davenport](#) *I remember my grandfather, Jack Puckett, relating a story of a German aircraft crashing on Black Hill. He and others captured the pilot and returned him to Cerne where he was handed over to the civil police. The Cerne men were equipped with shotguns and pitch forks. Jack Puckett joined the RAF in June 1941 so it may be that this event occurred prior to then.*

[Lin Shiner](#) *My mum Jean Copp remembers a tale of one German airman who was either found in or kept in the abbey gate house at Cerne. Carved his name on the wall?*

[Ian Marsh](#) *I seem to remember my mother telling us a story about her and some friends cycling from Cerne to Minterne when a large piece of plane went over them and crashed into a nearby field. I've now spoken with my mother and she said herself and Nancy Mitchell were cycling home from school when the German bomber was shot down. They took cover at what used to be Hollybank? Farm, they watched it go down out of sight, she said it crashed near the top Sherborne to Dorchester road. She said that there were three parachutes floating down, one landed on black hill which is the one Jack Puckett apprehended. She's not sure where the other 2 came down but that all 3 were captured.*

*After this they saw the local postman cycling up the road and came out from their hiding place to follow him.*

*Just up the road from Hollybank where there's a red brick bungalow on the right (which hadn't been built at the time) a piece of a plane landed in front of them which they picked up and took to the police station in Cerne. Having gone through all of this they arrived home to the biggest telling off for being late home from school.*



**Ian Denness continues:**

A number of newspapers carried reports which place the Dorset air battle, which appears to have taken place in the afternoon of Monday 7 October 1940, in the context of a wider raid by the German air force. **This is taken from page 3 of the Plymouth-based *Western Morning News* of 8 October 1940**





## PILOT'S PRAISE German Rear Gunner Kept Up An Accurate Fire

A single Dornier 215 bomber attacked by three Spitfires put up the best fight of the day. The Spitfire pilot spoke approvingly of the German rear gunner's intense and accurate fire. As the Spitfires circled and dived on him, he kept fighting back. Not until the Dornier was over the Channel did its rear gunner stop firing. Then the German plunged down.

All but two of the enemy shot down in these Kent-Surrey raids were Messerschmitts.

By contrast, bombers and fighter bombers suffered heavily during the mid-afternoon raid over Dorset and Somerset. Some fifty raiders took part in this Westcountry attack, and the reports so far received show that nearly a quarter of them were destroyed—at least five heavy bombers, six Messerschmitt 110 fighter bombers, and one M.E. 109.

Shortly after the return of a lifeboat

from rescuing a Nazi airman shot down in the Channel two other German machines dropped bombs in the neighbourhood of the lifeboat station.

Within a few minutes of London's usual night warning—the sixth alert of the day—enemy aircraft were heard, followed by bomb explosions and heavy A.A. fire. Incendiaries rained down within a small area in Central London, but the fires were quickly extinguished.

### FORCED TO FLY HIGH.

After a lone raider had made its usual nightly appearance over North-West London there was a steady stream from the South-East.

As one raider flew very low a nearby A.A. gun roared into action once and the uneven drone of the aircraft's engine was silenced. It is believed the 'plane was put out of action.

A second 'plane flew over a few minutes later and others followed at regular intervals, but heavy guns kept the machines flying high.

## RINGED BY SHELLS

### Attack By Messerschmitts On Barrage Balloons Fails

Off the Kent coast hordes of enemy machines were heavily engaged by A.A. batteries and British fighters. Three Messerschmitts were completely ringed by bursting shells, and Spitfires scattered big droves of 'planes in disorder.

One raider attacked barrage balloons, and two fell in flames as the aircraft escaped to the French coast. A Messerschmitt chased by a Spitfire dived out of control into the Channel.

After twelve Nazi 'planes swept suddenly out of the clouds and released about a dozen bombs over one South-East London residential district, two persons were extricated from wrecked houses, but it was feared others were still beneath debris.

In another South-East London area an oil-bomb dropped outside a shelter, but there were no casualties.

An ME 110 set alight by the bullet of a British fighter during the air battle over Dorset late yesterday afternoon crashed only 100 yards from Corfe Castle police station. Before the machine was completely enveloped in flames the pilot was saved and taken into the police station. His companion's body was taken from the 'plane.

The enemy formation, completely broken by British fighters, fled back towards the coast.

One enemy 'plane, believed to be another ME 110, was brought down on open heathland a mile outside Wareham.

**R**AIDS on London and Southern England yesterday have been practically continuous. They followed the quietest night since the air blitz commenced, and from dawn to late afternoon British fighters were engaged in repelling wave after wave of invading 'planes.

There were many alerts in the London area, and during one two formations of bombers reached the suburbs, where a number of bombs were dropped and property was damaged. Some people were killed, a number injured, and others buried in debris.

Enemy raiders crossing the Dorset coast were heavily engaged by fighters during the afternoon.

Seven enemy aircraft are believed to have been shot down. There are no reports of bombs having been dropped.

The 'planes came down at Sidling, Cerne Abbas, Buckland Newton, Preston (Weymouth), Kingston Russell, Burton Bradstock, and Corfe Castle.

Some damage was done to one town in the South-West.





## George Mortimer continues:

### Evacuation

However, the beginning of the war had a more immediate impact on the village: the arrival of the first evacuees from London. On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1939, the day before World War 2 was officially declared, a total of 216 girls and 33 staff left Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls, in Acton, West London by train for destinations unknown. The Historical Society has a copy of a letter written by one of the teachers, Jeanie Parker. Jeanie, with 60 pupils and five staff, arrived at 'Giant View' in Cerne Abbas the same day. Jeanie describes the very basic conditions and the kindness of the local people. 'Giant View' was what is now the Casterbridge Care Home, but in 1939 it was a youth hostel with its design and amenities little improved from when it was the Union Workhouse built in 1837. Although the children were content in dormitories and enjoyed being together, Jeanie was not keen to face winter in such spartan conditions. Happily, they were moved to new billets in Dorchester a couple of weeks later. We understand that Cerne Abbas was used for more evacuees during the war, but we have no knowledge of the details. Does anyone have any recollections on this to tell us?

#### *Extract from Jeanie Parker's letter*

The sanitary arrangements are appalling - we have 1 tap, the only water supply for the entire house and a sink to which all slops have to go - my poor infants, lower W's have to carry all their pots and jugs down one flight of very dark stairs, I have a dormitory for my 11, something of a picnic when they are all in, especially when they are just at the age when they can't keep a thing tidy for 5 minutes. my babe aged 7 is the joy of my heart, I am becoming most maternal believe me! We are with



Photo Courtesy of the Bob Prowse Archive





## George Mortimer continues:

### Home Guard and the ARP

In May 1940, Anthony Eden created the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), changed by Winston Churchill in July to the Home Guard. Cerne Abbas became a platoon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Dorset Home Guard and was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> August. It included young and old, with many of the former going on to join the regular armed forces. Amongst them was the late 'Eddie', Lord Digby, who subsequently joined the Coldstream Guards. The Dorset Home Guard were quickly organised, trained

and equipped, and by December 1940 the Cerne Abbas platoon had 43 members and were fully armed, but with only 3 steel helmets between them! However, there can be no doubt that they would have given a good account of themselves if invasion had come. The diary kept by the platoon is held by the Historical Society and records the relative humdrum of keeping night watch, but also aircraft activity and explosions heard. Despite this, their diary for 27<sup>th</sup> September, when the Revd Ray was reporting intense enemy aircraft activity overhead, only records the *'inadequacy of the blackout of the village hall during whist drive'*! Complementary to the Home Guard were ARP (Air Raid Precautions) Wardens, as anyone who has watched *Dad's Army* will know! Dave Fox's father was one. Their duties included enforcing the 'Blackout'. A Fire Guard team was also formed, but happily there is no record of their services being required.

Dave Fox remembers that there was a searchlight battery in the village for much of the war, first at the top of Alton Lane and then in the cricket field in Simsay. There were also barrage balloons in the Cerne Valley, but these proved to be a useful target for German aircraft gunners and their use was short-lived.

### The Beginning of the End

Both Dave Fox and Betty Marsh clearly remember the build-up to D-Day. A temporary encampment of US soldiers was set up much where the Giant Brewery is today, and an obvious magnet for children looking for treats that rationing had denied them. Betty remembers that: *'Just prior to D-Day the area was 'crawling' with US soldiers and tanks parked on every road in the village. There was movement all night on the 5 June, then nothing; they had all gone'*. In the Folly, impressions of tracked vehicles are still just visible

on the road. Dave later remembers ambulances coming from the coast: red lights for Allied wounded, blue for German. They were heading for Minterne House which had been requisitioned as a hospital or to hospitals beyond.

*The old Village Hall in Wills Lane*





## Victory at Last

VE Day came on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945. There was general rejoicing across the nation and beyond. The Western Gazette for 18 May 1945 reports that in Cerne Abbas *'street and houses were quickly decorated and a social arranged ...at a free night at the Village Hall'*. There had been regular fund-raising dances in the old village hall in Wills Lane throughout the war. The Gazette goes on to say that *'a large bonfire was built on the Giant and Hitler burnt'*. A thanksgiving service was held on the Tuesday evening, at which the church was crowded.

It is poignant to note that Walter Charles Downton, a married man, was killed in action the following day in far off Burma, a timely reminder that Japan had yet to be defeated. However, when VJ Day came on 15 August there were equal celebrations. The Gazette reports that *'the whole village danced in the Square, as many as 300 people assembling. Lord and Lady Digby danced with them and their house in Abbey Street was floodlit, as well as the village pond which looked very pretty with fairy lights'*.

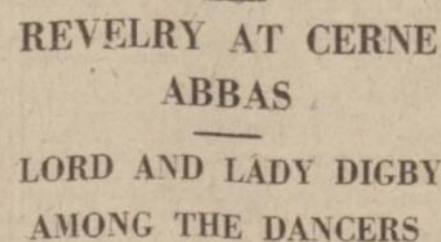


Western Gazette (18 May 1945 p6)



R.N. Auxiliary Hospital - Minterne Magna.  
1941-2.

The Digby family had moved into Abbey House at the top of Abbey Street, which they bought in 1937 as part of the Abbey Estate, when Minterne House was requisitioned.



Western Gazette August 1945

Missing from the celebrations were the church bells which had been silent for decades as dangerous. It was only in 1978 that they were restored to their present condition.

Patricia Vale adds her own memory of VE Day. In May 1945 Patricia was a corporal in the radar section of the RAF at Prawle Point near Salcombe. When the end of the war was declared she and the other young women there wanted to go out to celebrate and light bonfires. However, they were forbidden from doing so because it was believed that there were German submarines off the coast which probably did not know that the war was over. They had to wait until VJ Day to celebrate!





# Joan Keeble's

## Memories of Cerne



*Photo Courtesy of the Bob Prowse Archive*



**Tim, Robin and Pauline Mills write**

Below is an article written by Mrs Joan Keeble, who lived in Cerne from the late 1960s until she went to live in Hay-on-Wye in the 1990s, to be nearer her family. It is a wonderfully vivid description of village life over 50 years ago, which brings to life both the people who lived and worked here, and the inspiration she found in the natural world of the area. These were the aspects of Cerne life closest to her heart. She sadly died on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2020 aged over 100.

Joan was probably our mother's closest friend. They became friends in Worcestershire where our parents farmed before coming to Dorset in 1959 settling in Cerne Abbas in 1969. Joan and her husband Hugh, and children Nicholas and Monica followed them to Dorset a few years later on Hugh's retirement. They first lived in Cerne at the Dairy House, Abbey Street, then settled at Fisher's Beck in the Folly, next door to Dogwood where Tim now lives.

*This article is one of several Joan wrote for the Countryman Magazine. We will publish others in coming issues.*

*Background Photo Courtesy of the Bob Prowse Archive*





## Joan Keeble

### ‘A Good Day’s Work ‘

It was an interesting time to have lived in Cerne because in the early 1960s it was still a relatively small village, and by the mid-1980s it had almost exactly doubled in size. When I first came to live there it was possible to know everyone by sight and nearly everyone by name.

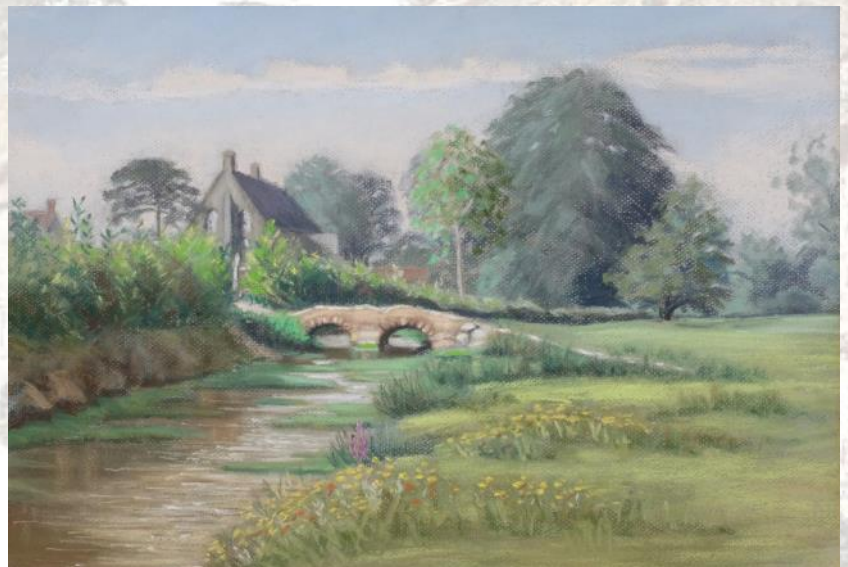
There was no Abbey Court, Simsay, Abbots Walk, Springfield or Chescombe Close. Canon Taylor was the vicar.

Mr Miles kept Duck Street Garage, that generous friend to all the young men in the village who had just bought their first old car. The Dubbens had the shop on the corner of Duck Street and Mr Groves was at the Stores. Dusty Durrant delivered the papers in his old car which he often drove absentmindedly through the village on the right hand side of the road as he greeted his friends.

Bill Hart was the postman but of course he was much more than that. Tall, courteous and discreet, he was a lifeline to many old people, especially to those living in outlying cottages. Year after year he quietly brought their pensions, stamped their letters and carried messages.

He always made time to talk to the lonely on his rounds and he was one of the most respected men in the village.

The Marsh brothers were at Barton Farm. I can see them now, making their slow patient way up the Cerne, knee deep in water, clearing the heavy trailing river weed with its starry white flowers, and cleaning the wide banks all the way from the spinney near the edge of Black Hill to their boundary at the Tithe Barn. Their hedges were well laid and their gates and stiles well maintained, always the sign of a good farmer. Joe and Muriel still live in the village.



***The Tithe Barn and the Cerne by Pat Mills c1970. Courtesy Robin Mills***

I remember Walt Lake. Years before I knew him he lived with his family at Bottom Barn in Up Cerne, and his four children walked the two miles to Cerne school in all weathers. In those days sheep grazed the high chalk downs above the valley and Walt was the shepherd. “Many a night at harvest time I have still been on the rick when Up Cerne church clock struck nine” he would say. “But we were happy enough; we knew we had done a good day’s work.” He had thatched almost every house in Cerne in his time, including the high Whiteknights Lodge. In his seventies he laid the very long hedge under Giant Hill in Northmead, and he would have won any hedging contest by the result of his labour.

*“I count myself as nothing else so happy as in a soul remembering my good friends.”*

*Joan’s quote is from Shakespeare’s Richard II: Act 2 Scene 3*





Dating the Giant



# Martin Papworth

**For five days in March, National Trust archaeologists and volunteers dug four small trenches into the chalk outline of the Cerne Abbas Giant. These were the first archaeological excavations on this scheduled monument and the results were exciting and unexpected.**

Ever since the dating of the Uffington White Horse in Oxfordshire, it had been known that a technique existed that might enable the age of the Giant to be understood. Since the 1990s, there had been discussions about the way the research might be carried out at Cerne, but funding had never been found for this.

The Pitt-Rivers family transferred ownership of the Cerne Abbas Giant in July 1920 and as the centenary of the National Trust's acquisition approached, funding was at last found. The potential for dating of the Giant centred on the technique used at Uffington. This was optically stimulated luminescence or OSL. The basic science around OSL is that sediments can be measured to determine the last time they were exposed to light.



## ***an exciting observation***

In September 2019, a meeting took place on the steep slope of the Giant. This was between, National Trust archaeologist, Martin Papworth and Mike Allen, environmental archaeologist.

The previous month, the Giant had been re-chalked and subsequently there had been heavy rain. The water run-off had carved little valleys down the legs of the chalk figure and sediments had settled at his feet. Mike pointed out that repeated rainstorms would bring down more and more soil and have the cumulative effect of raising the level of the feet. This was an exciting observation because it would bury earlier episodes of re-chalking.

There had been some concern that the repeated 'scourings' of the Giant might have taken away the earliest sediments and the possibility of dating him; but these build-ups of rain wash at the feet provided at least two opportunities. Further up the slope, it could be seen that the same deeper sediments had accumulated at the elbows. Over lunch, at the New Inn Cerne Abbas, it was decided to apply for scheduled monument consent to dig four trenches; two at the upper line of the elbows and two at the soles of his feet.



Preparations were made and mid-March was chosen to carry out the work. This was quite early in the year for excavation, but it gave enough time for the soil samples to be analysed to enable the announcement of the results. This would take place in the Cerne Abbas Village Hall in July on the centenary anniversary.

### ***the survival of earlier re-chalkings***

There were concerns over the conditions for the fieldwork, as it was cold and rained almost every day leading up to the excavation. We booked a site office with a heater, hot water and a kettle just in case of inclement weather. However, when Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March arrived, it was a clear sunny day and the rest of the week was OK though chilly and damp at times.

The surprise of the trenches was the survival of earlier re-chalkings and that each chalking had a distinctive element. At first, it was possible to trace deposits to a known episode and the 2019, 2008 and 1995 events were each clear and 2-3 centimetre deep. The two chalkings before that had been industrial in scale in sharp contrast to the staff and volunteer work parties of the last 25 years.

In 1979 and 1956, the contractors E.W. Beard of Swindon had been appointed for the re-chalkings because of their experience of similar work on the Uffington White Horse. Their impact was clear in the trenches as a 25cm deep kibbled chalk deposit.

Below this was a rammed surface of chalk over large chunks of chalk up to 20cm deep over a thin silty layer, over a harder and slightly thicker pasty layer which in turn covered a 35cm deep chunky chalk layer. This had been cut 35cm wide into the chalk bedrock of the hill. From top to bottom the build-up of re-chalking layers was 80cm deep.

### ***marked out with wooden stakes.***

In three of the trenches, timber stakes were found. These were roughly worked pieces of wood, like chestnut paling. One piece hammered into the upper edge of the right foot chalk line was 50cm long but it was driven in from the level of the kibbled chalk and therefore the stakes were unlikely to be earlier than the mid-twentieth century. At some time, it seems, the whole giant had been marked out with wooden stakes.

It was noticeable, in all the trenches, that the chalk figure had slipped slightly over time; his elbows 20cm and his feet 40cm lower down the slope at the present ground surface when compared with the chalk bedrock cutting.

All these chalking layers, although containing no artefacts to date them, had a similar 'presence' and there were no visible periods of abandonment. The feeling was that these layers of archaeology represented a period of about 250-350 years. However, the cutting of the lower chalk layer went through a hollowed terrace cut into the chalk and this was a consistent feature in all four trenches.

The hillside had been sculpted at a much earlier date and this coincided with the later cutting for the Giant. Mike Allen looked at the surviving soils filling these terraces and felt that, in the Giant's feet trenches, there were particularly good examples of an orange brown colluvial soil which could be sampled.






## ***what the science tells us***

On the last day of the excavation, Professor Philip Toms from the University of Gloucestershire took OSL samples and collected data using a gamma spectrometer. Mike Allen took soil samples to look at the archaeological formation of the soil and the species of snail that once lived on the hillside. Their tiny shells survive in the chalk and give information on past environments. Some snails have been introduced since the medieval period and their presence at the deepest levels would disprove a prehistoric or Roman Giant.

It may be that there was an ancient Giant, abandoned and allowed to grass over. Perhaps it was faintly visible at certain times of the year in low sunlight and eventually, a landowner decided to mark him out as an interpretation of something that was once there.

We must wait and see what the science tells us, and this must wait until the labs re-open again after the shut-down.

The hillside was also due to be flown by drone to carry out a high-resolution laser scan of the Giant as this would show subtle undulations and potential changes to his profile over time. This survey was due to take place on the Wednesday following the excavation but unfortunately it has had to be put on hold for now. Our trenches will have a chance to grass over and heal before the drone eventually collects its data.



Collecting data using a gamma spectrometer

Many thanks to archaeological volunteers my National Trust colleagues and to others for their advice and specialist help. Thanks to the people of Cerne Abbas for their interest and to members of the Cerne Abbas Historical Society for historical and geological advice and for sharing information.

You can read more about and see more photos of the excavations in Martin's blog:

<https://archaeologynationaltrustsw.wordpress.com/2020/03/30/cerne-10-the-luxury-portacabin/>





# Letters

Following the first issue of the Magazine on 9 April, we have received letters of appreciation from all corners of the earth. They seem in the same boat as us.

**David Kirkpatrick** writes,

*Many thanks to all for providing a WONDERFUL magazine. It is just one more way Jan and I can stay connected to the village that we hold so dear. We are very grateful. The spirit of village life lives even far, far away. Best wishes for you all and stay safe.*

*Cheers.*

*Jan & David*

Charlotte, USA and Long Street, Cerne Abbas.

**Graham Clark** writes,

*Thank you so much for sending this to me. It is very good and so interesting. A lot of work will have gone into producing it too.*

*I was interested to hear how you are coping with the virus. Like you we are now in a lock-down with only those in essential services still working and if possible that is from home. The only retail shops open are food (supermarkets and small corner shops but not butchers, bakeries, greengrocers) and pharmacies. We are allowed to go for a walk for exercise so long as we keep at least 2 metres away from people. There are almost no cars about, no internal flights and the borders are basically closed. We have had two weeks of lock-down with at least another two weeks to go. New Zealand went into the lock-down very early in the epidemic. Most new cases were people who had returned from overseas and prior to the lock-down they had to go into isolation for two weeks. Our number of new cases has just gone past a peak and now seem to be declining day by day. We have had two deaths. By doing a lot of testing and contact tracing of cases, the intention is for total eradication of the virus and then maintaining this until a vaccine is developed. During this time we can expect the lock-down to finish and a return to some sort of normality, but with future lock-downs likely if a number of cases return.*

*With kind regards*

Auckland, North Island, NZ





# Letters

**Sean Lusk** writes,

*I just wanted to say how very impressed I am by the new magazine. I've just read it from cover to cover, and enjoyed and felt informed by it all. Bravo!*

*I hope all in Cerne are coping in the lockdown. Sally and I have been living in rural Greece for the past year. Here the lockdown is even more severe than in the UK, and the Greek government has instituted a system whereby one has to send a text message to the police each time one wants to leave the house for any one of six specified reasons. It's all automated and rather clever.*

*The virus reminds us all that our forebears had to cope with periodic spells in which plague stalked the land. I wonder whether there is any research on how the plague affected Cerne or the area around about in those years.*

*With very best wishes,*

*Sean*

The Folly, C.A.

**Brian Edwards** writes,

*By way of introduction, I am the historian that Martin Papworth mentioned in his blog:*

*<https://archaeologynationaltrustsw.wordpress.com/2020/03/30/cerne-10-the-luxury-portacabin/>*

*I thought I should get in touch to congratulate the Society on the production of the magazine. In view of the circumstances we all find ourselves in, this is an initiative that will be well received surely. The presentation was first class, I really enjoyed studying the cover photograph, and the content proved an informative and entertaining read. I very much look forward to the next edition. Very well done.*

*All the best,*

*Brian*


Research Fellow, University of the West of England, Bristol.









# Letters

 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.

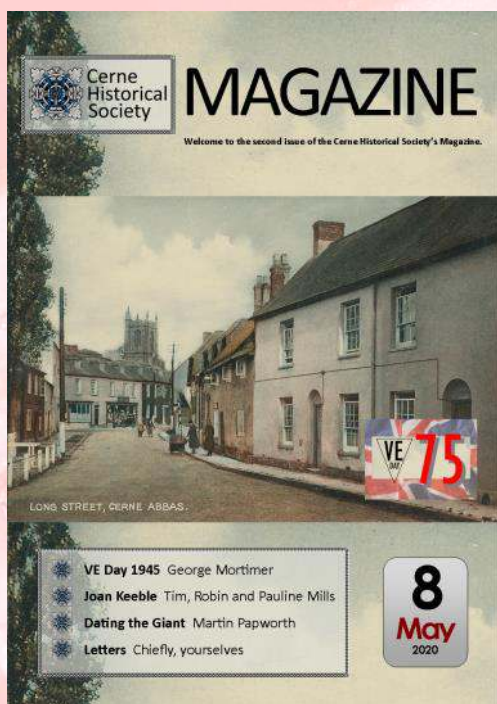
 Your magazine would love to hear from you, including any suggestions for future issues at the email address shown below, but please put a note through my door at 3 Abbey Court, if you prefer.

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

**[gcmortimer@btinternet.com](mailto:gcmortimer@btinternet.com)**

We reserve the right to publish if no objection is expressed in your email or letter.

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