





Cerne
Historical
Society


MAGAZINE





Is this the west face of the lost Cerne Abbey?

 **Abbey Speculations** Richard Wilkin

 **Barton Farmhouse** Janet Bartlet

 **Victorian Cricket** Ian Denness

 **The Giant: Three points of view:**
M Allen, R Castleden, R Foulser

 **The Cerne Tannery** Robin Mills

Summer
2021



May marked the announcement by the National Trust of the results of the tests carried out by them on the Giant in March 2020 to ascertain his age. Many feared that the results might damage, if not destroy the aura and mystery which has surrounded him for so long. Thankfully that has not been the case.

Had the tests shown that he was cut out of the hillside in the 17th century and therefore that he was probably created by Lord Hollis as a caricature of Oliver Cromwell, as recent theories have suggested, that would undoubtedly have demeaned the Giant. However, what they have shown is that he was probably constructed by the Anglo-Saxons in the late C10th AD. That raises the questions of by whom and why was he constructed. The national newspapers were full of theories within hours of the results being published and there can be no doubt the debate will continue for a very long time, unless documentary evidence, so far undiscovered, comes to light.

In this issue Mike Allen, an environmental archaeologist and geoarchaeologist who helped carry out the tests with Martin Papworth, the National Trust's Chief Archaeologist, explains more about the results and what they could mean. Rodney Castleden, an archaeologist and historian and the author of the 1996 book *The Cerne Giant*, also sets out why and by whom he believes the Giant was created. Bob Foulser, one of our members and a resident of Abbey Street, provides yet another interesting theory of why the Giant came into existence. If you have a theory do send it to us either as a letter or a short article and we will try to publish it in a future issue of the magazine.

In addition in this issue Janet Bartlet, also an archaeologist, writes about Barton Farmhouse, where she and her husband Gordon have lived for over 30 years, and the parts of the house which include materials emanating from the Abbey. Richard Wilkin, an architectural artist and member of our committee, tells us, with the aid of some beautiful drawings, what he believes the Abbey Church may have looked like. Two other members of the committee, Ian Denness and Robin Mills, provide respectively fascinating accounts of Victorian Cricket in Cerne Abbas and life, including bark milling, in the Tanyard. As part of our research into the Abbey Church and other buildings and inspired by Janet Bartlet and Richard Wilkin's articles, the CHS has decided to carry out a survey into building materials and other relics from the Abbey which have been incorporated into buildings or otherwise can be found in the village and the surrounding area. We are therefore launching a Survey of Abbey Relics with this issue of the Magazine which you can complete with an on-line form, which is on the following page. Additionally, to catch a wider audience, we will be distributing a flyer with the next Benefice Newsletter. In both we explain the "relics" that we would like you to tell us about, either by filling in the online form or completing the back of the flyer and sending us any photographs. We are hoping that we will thereby gain a better understanding of what the Abbey looked like and how much of it was used to create some of the buildings which are in the area today.

The next meeting of the Society will be at 7.30 pm on 24 June when Richard Crumbleholme will give a talk on Dorset Windmills. As usual there will be no meetings in July or August, although Chris Copson has kindly agreed to give a guided tour of Maiden Castle at 6pm on 5 July, for which a few spaces are still available. Please contact mikeclarkcerne@gmail.com if you would like to take part. From September onwards we hope that we will be able to hold our monthly meetings in the Village Hall once more.



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Cerne Abbey Relics Survey

Tell us about your Cerne Abbey Finds

We are launching an important survey to locate and log each Abbey find which will give us valuable information in our quest

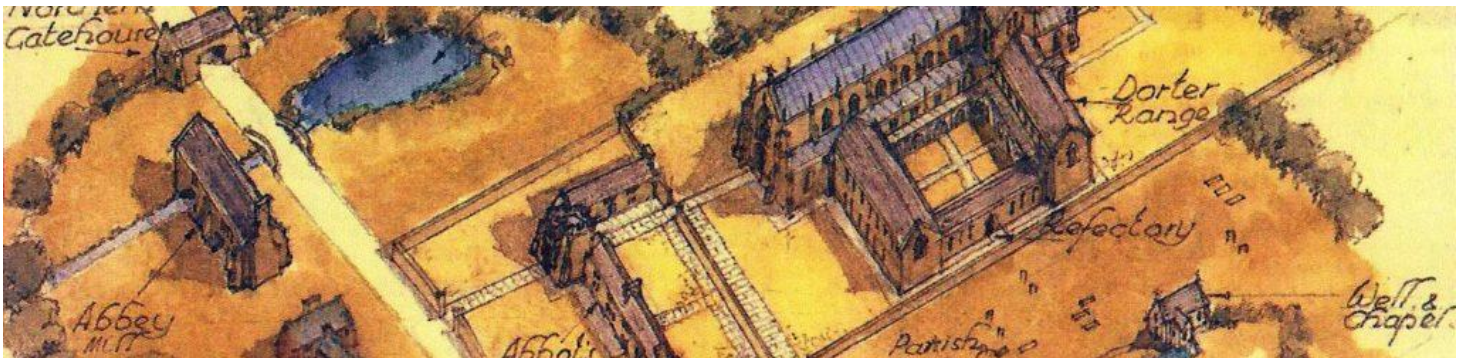
to Find the Lost Cerne Abbey.

Many buildings in Cerne have artefacts suspected of having been retrieved from the ruins of Cerne Abbey after the Dissolution. You may be unaware that you have archaeological treasures in your garden. Please help us **locate, log & study** these items. **We are not asking you to donate them!**

What do we hope to find?

Pieces of masonry from the Abbey Church and other buildings including:

- Window mullion or sill pieces
- Hamstone lintels or mouldings
- Limestone blocks reused in buildings
- Ornamentation used over doorways or arches
- Floor or roof tile sherds
- Pieces of pillars, pediments or columns
- Fragments of effigies, gargoyles etc.



Record your Finds here

You can tell us about one of more Finds!



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<https://tinyurl.com/mvapdp8w>

Tell us about your Cerne Abbey Finds

Please use the QR code above if you can, or go to <https://tinyurl.com/mvapdp8w>

but if you prefer please print and complete this form and leave it at one of the addresses below

YOUR CONTACT DETAILS:

WHEN DID YOU FIND IT?.....

.....

.....

WHERE FOUND? (eg in a wall, dug up)

.....

WHAT MATERIAL IS IT MADE FROM?.....

.....

IS IT ON YOUR LAND OR PUBLIC LAND?

DESCRIPTION?

.....

.....

.....

PHOTOGRAPHS? Do you have any we may use? YES/NO

If not, would you be happy for the Cerne Historical Society

to arrange to photograph it? YES/NO

DATA PROTECTION. Are you happy for the Cerne Historical Society

to share the information you have given us, for research purposes? YES/NO

PLEASE LEAVE YOUR FORM IN THE CERNE VILLAGE STORES

OR **3 ABBEY COURT**

OR **17 ABBEY STREET**





We do not yet know where the Cerne Abbey Church sat but these thoughts suggest what the building *may* have looked like.... and could give some hints to help solve the outstanding mystery of where it was placed.

Readers may be familiar with images of the surviving Cerne Abbey Seal. This is held in the National Archives in Kew.



The Seal is intriguing. A close look suggests that it may be quite an accurate description of what at least the West front of the Abbey Church might have looked like. On initial inspection, the Seal appears as a typical medieval architectural distortion. However, closer examination of its detail and a bit of related research suggests otherwise.

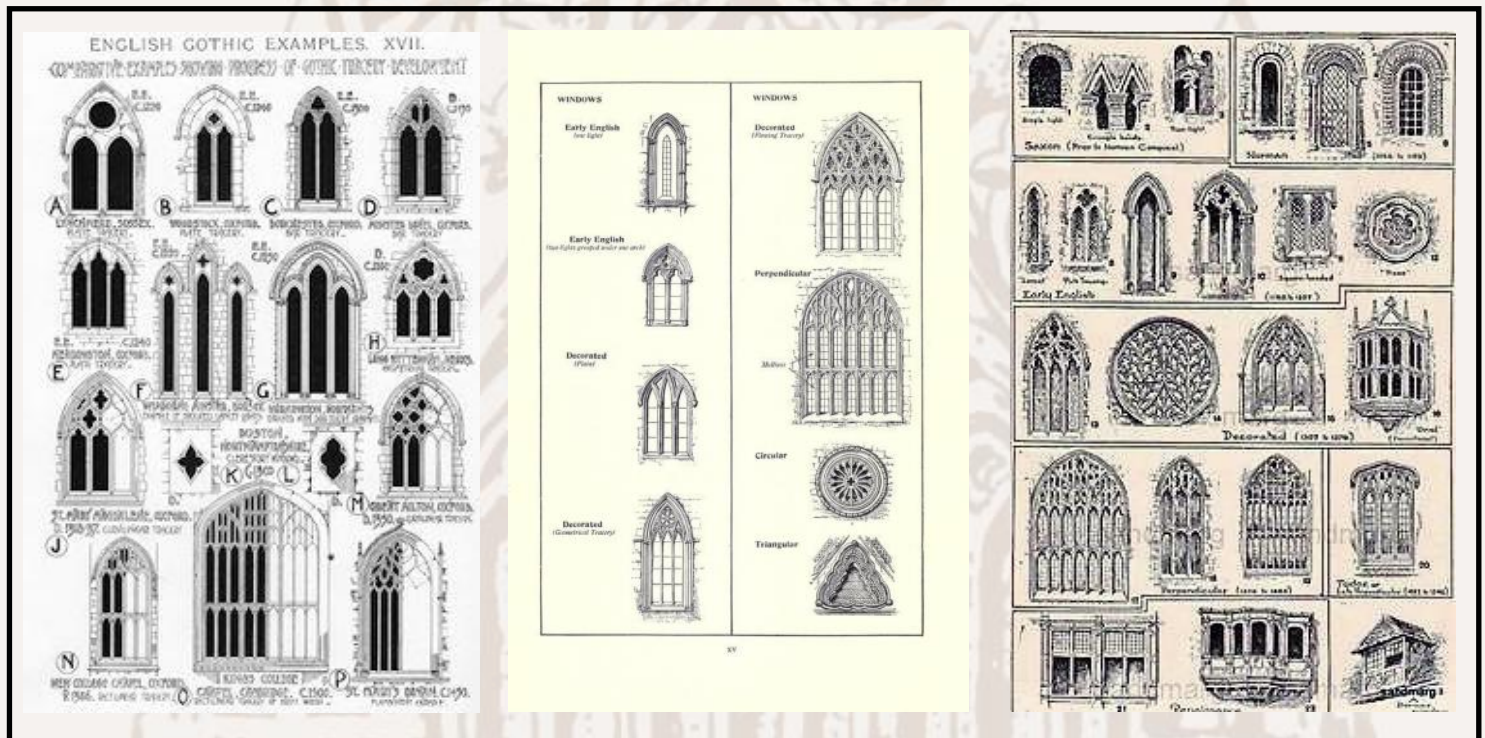
A subsequent enhancement by Rodney Castleden in his book *The Cerne Giant*, is shown at right.

The date of the Seal is said to be **C13th** and presumably represents a contemporary depiction of the Abbey Church as it then stood. If it does, the lancet windows and decorative detail it shows on the Church building would be on the cusp of designated '**Early English**' (c1180 - 1250) and the later '**Decorated**' style. We see that both of these styles appear on the Seal - more obviously Early English.



West front of the Abbey Church as drawn by Rodney Castleden from the C13th abbatial seal.

The following shows some examples of the 'Early English' style:



When compared with these examples and images of other contemporary buildings the proportions as shown on the Seal seem correct.

The Abbey Church itself was said to have been built late C11th. Comparison with contemporary Benedictine buildings (notably Binham Priory) and later ones (e.g. Whitby Abbey) suggests that Cerne would perhaps have been more like the former - slightly squat - than the latter - towering. Such a construction would perhaps lend itself to and fit the intimate space in Beavor field and its surrounding medieval structures.



Binham and Whitby



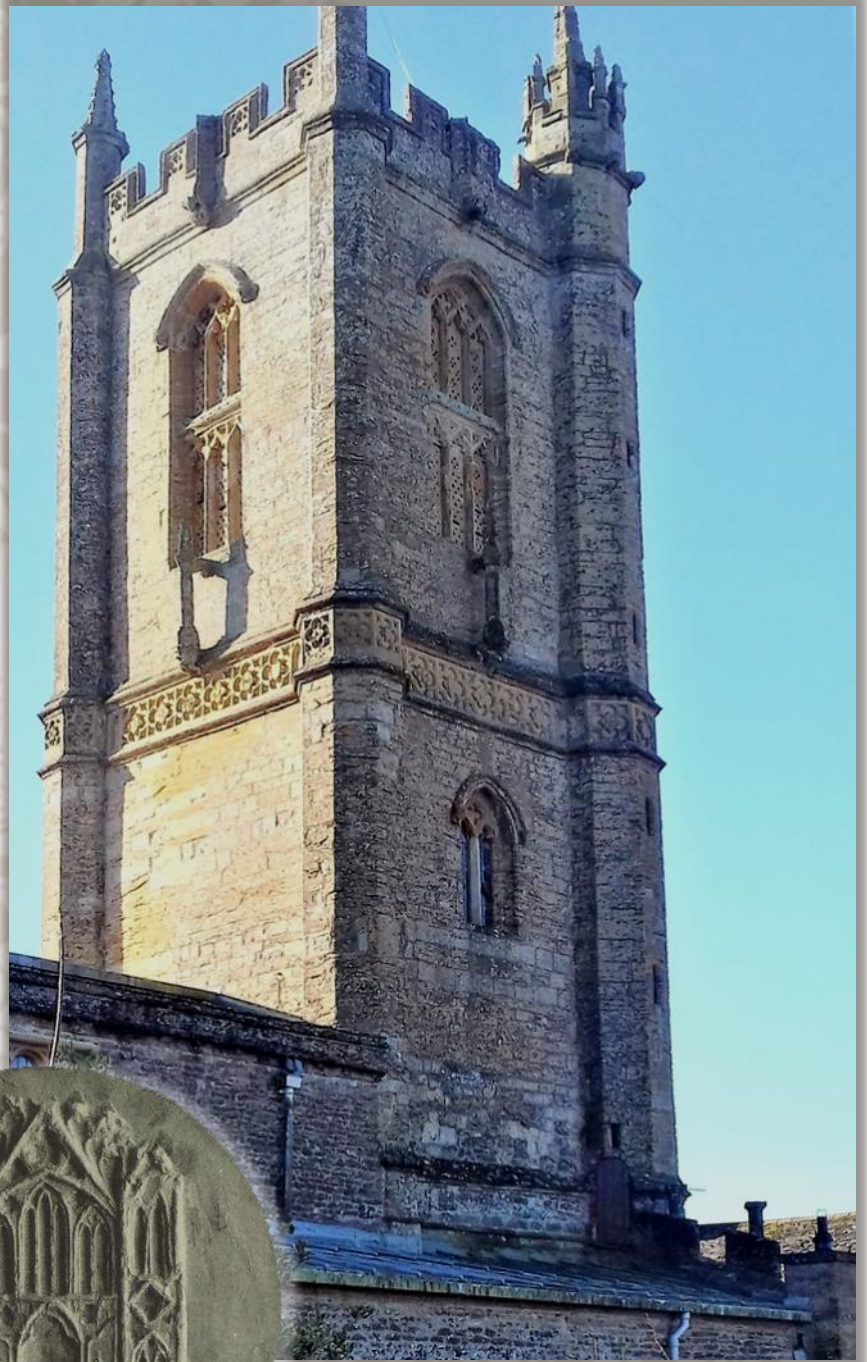
For a fuller comparison set of Benedictine and other medieval Abbey/Priory churches, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_abbey_priories_and_friaries_serving_as_parish_churches

Relating these thoughts to St Mary's Parish Church in Cerne is also interesting.

The trefoil lancet windows at the far east end of the Chancel in that church and in the second stage north face of the tower are clearly similar to those that appear on the Abbey Seal - and they are contemporary Early English. As such they presumably remain from the first phase of the construction of St. Mary's (early C14th) before the later addition of the aisles, clerestory and heightened tower in 1540.

Beyond this, the decorative band on the heightened tower contains quatrefoil symbols that generally precede this later date and may have been influenced by and copied from the Abbey.

These conjectures could also perhaps give weight to the authenticity of the image derived from the Seal.



So following this conjecture, a sketch to interpret the seal is shown below.



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One uncertain element in this illustration remains the tops of the towers. These appear to be conical decorations rather than capped - but may in fact be the latter.

Also conjecture is what the size of the West door might be and what its surrounds might have looked like. The sketch draws on contemporary examples, shown below. Many medieval images used to show exaggerated doors, perhaps with some symbolic meaning.

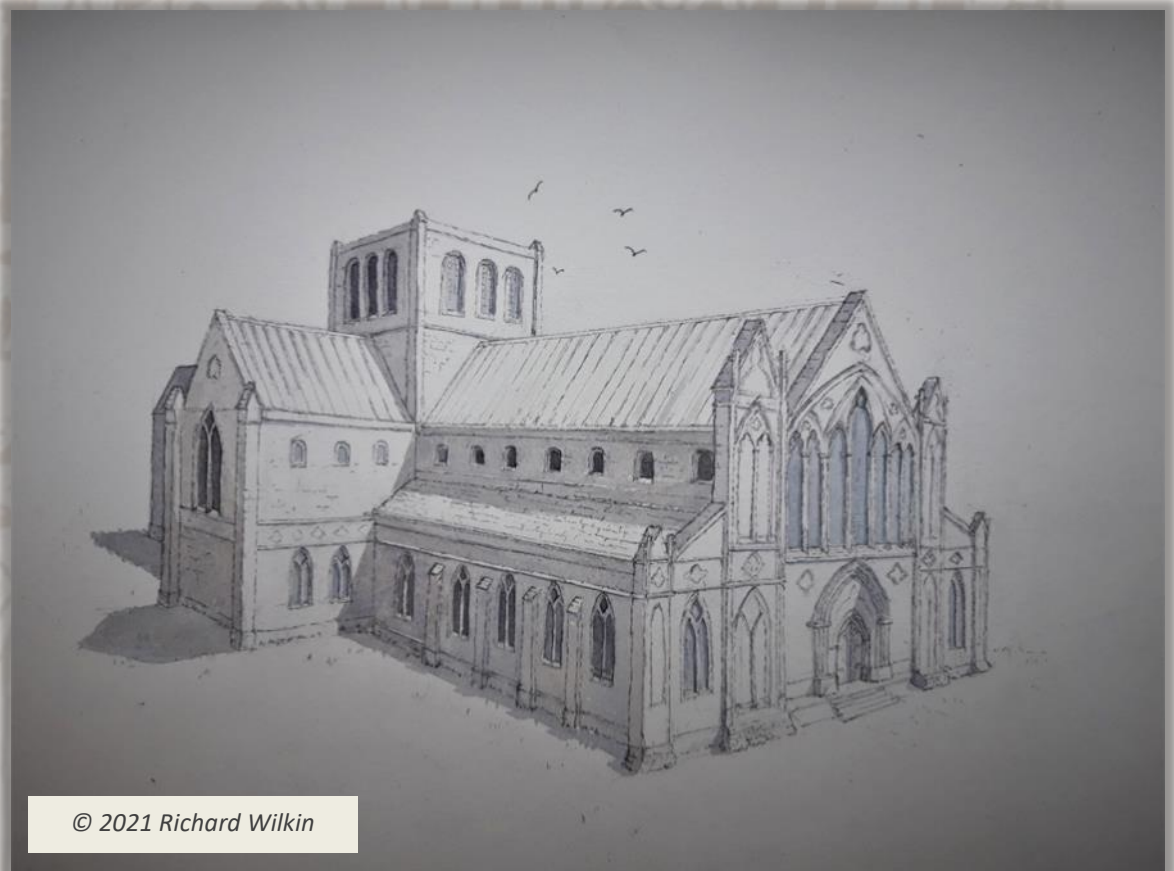
But the Abbey would almost certainly have had side aisles, a tower and a transept. These aisles were often added or embellished in a subsequent building phase.

If the seal thesis is correct we can have a reasonable snapshot of what at least the West front of the Abbey probably looked like at a certain moment. But imagining the rest of the building, at that time, is inevitably speculative.



This further sketch of the whole of the building follows the same thinking but is simply an 'informed suggestion' - no more than that. We still don't know for sure. But current investigation with modern and sophisticated techniques could well suggest where the building sat, what its ground plan was and perhaps confirm this speculation of what it looked like – at least in the early 14th century.

This depiction suggests a comparatively plain 11th c original structure: Norman windows in the clerestory and tower. The tower itself might well have been capped. The West front – which we suggest is authentically shown on the seal - would point to a late 13th/early 14th century embellishment in the 'Early English' style.



This addition might have been made around, say, 1280 / 1320 when England was prosperous, before the climate shift in 1326 and the arrival shortly thereafter of the Black Death. This style might have been echoed in the aisles and elsewhere on the building. And that work would have coincided with the original creation of St Mary's Parish Church.

There may well have been subsequent embellishments, perhaps around the time that St Mary's was enlarged. It would be easy enough to calculate the size and dimensions of the building as shown and this in turn might help indicate where it sat.

Anyway, food for thought.





A History (in brief)

Barton Farm was originally owned by Cerne Abbey and farmed over 800 acres. The Tithe Barn, known as Barton Barn, was built in the 1300s to store grain and other produce, and the Barton Farmhouse was built nearby. Following the Dissolution of the Abbey in 1539, Barton Farm continued under a series of landlords, with all the barns, agricultural labourer's houses, Dairy and Farmhouse. In 1705 the village and Barton Farm passed to the Pitt-Rivers family. By 1800 the old Farmhouse was becoming dilapidated, so Pitt-Rivers arranged the first 'barn-conversion'. The Tithe Barn's southern end was altered into living accommodation for the Barton Farm estate manager and the Farmhouse now became the Dairy. In the 19th C Thomas Hardy attended meetings of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club and one club meeting is thought to have been held at the Tithe Barn. It is known that he used it as the model for the threshing scene in 'Far from the Madding Crowd'.



Fig 1



Fig 2a



Fig 2b

In 1919 the village was sold at auction by the Pitt-Rivers estate. Barton Farm, including the Tithe Barn, the Dairy House, 14 cottages and other buildings and 822 acres of land, was sold as Lot 2 to the sitting farm manager, Joseph Sprake, for £12,500. At some later date, the Tithe Barn was sold off separately and the last farm managers, Charles Marsh and his son Jo, went back to working from the old Farmhouse. The entrance to Barton Farmhouse and the Tithe Barn was by a direct road from Dorchester road, running south of all the farm buildings. Consequently the front door of the Farmhouse was facing south, and the backdoor led into the farmyard and barns. *Fig 2a*. When the farm road was abandoned in the 1970s, the Tithe Barn acquired a new entrance from the Folly, and the Farmhouse now had to use their previous back door as their main entrance! *Fig 2b*.

Barton Farm continued as a farm until the early 1990s, when it was sold up to become the site for a private housing estate for the Beechcroft Trust. Barton Farmhouse then became the private house it is today.

How old is the Farmhouse?

Fig 3



It is Grade 2 Listed, stated as of the '17th century'. However, the listing, done before 1970, only considered the exterior features such as windows, door frames and wall construction, but without examining anything internal. 25 years ago, intrigued by various internal oddities, we invited Martin Papworth and Bob Machin, both knowledgeable people in historical houses, to look round separately. They decided it might be a late medieval raised-cruck building with a central cross-passage, but with major late 16th century refurbishments and later reconstructions re-using earlier elements.

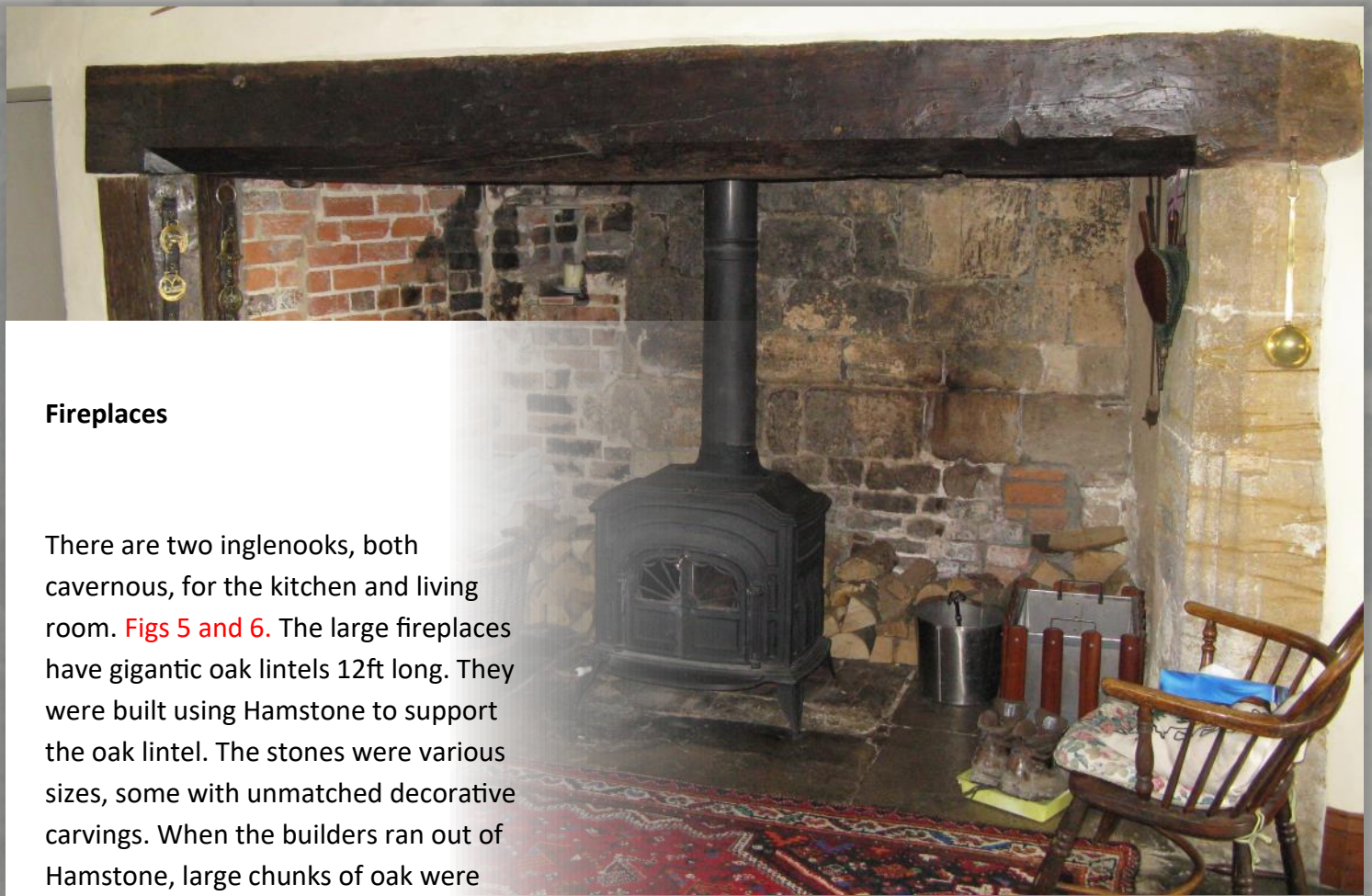


Fig 4

The Farmhouse was originally built using 3 pairs of cruck frames **Fig 3** to support the roof, a technique common in medieval times. Oak trees were selected with a gradual bend, sawn longitudinally in half, then turning one piece over so making an 'A' frame. This was completed by lying the frame on the ground while still green wood. Each part was then lifted up, resting the ends onto the inside of the half-built walls, each cruck frame separated by 10 feet. The result was that the roof became part of the main construction; very different from modern houses with wooden rafters put on last. These bulky frames, fitted together with wooden pegs and tongue and mortice joints, are obvious from inside the house. **Fig 4**. Our raised-crucks start 18 inches above the 1st floor boards, with their front edges clear of the stone walls. They increasingly intrude into the room with height, so become free trusses in the attic, with heavy cross-beams to form the A shape. There are other houses built with cruck frames in Cerne, but this historical construction method, used from 13th century to 1650, is now rare to find.



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Fireplaces

There are two inglenooks, both cavernous, for the kitchen and living room. **Figs 5 and 6.** The large fireplaces have gigantic oak lintels 12ft long. They were built using Hamstone to support the oak lintel. The stones were various sizes, some with unmatched decorative carvings. When the builders ran out of Hamstone, large chunks of oak were used instead. We know that the Abbey had been demolished and no stone was left unsold by 1575 and it is reasonable to speculate that these fireplaces were built from that source. There are also similar instances of this elsewhere in the village. Previous occupants had blocked up the kitchen fireplace and placed an Aga cooker in front. This was removed by Mr Lovell, the last owner of Barton Farm before us. Unexpectedly, the outside wall required some rebuilding in 1990, and we were amazed to find that the lintel's root ball was embedded into the 3' wall width, together with another root of a higher ceiling beam. We daubed on some wood preserver and the wall was finished.

Fig 5



Fig 6



Fireplaces contd.

Another blocked-in fireplace was found while decorating a bedroom. **Fig 7**. It has hamstone sides and lintel, which is 5' x 1.5' and arched. It had been blocked using bricks and then plastered over. We had wondered why there was a huge oak ceiling beam in the kitchen below and now we understand; it had much to support!



There is an interesting feature with these Inglenooks. The cruck frames in the attic are very black from soot. Prior to Queen Elizabeth's reign (1558-1603) few houses had fireplaces. Cooking and warmth was from open hearths laid centrally, with smoke rising up and filtering through the thatch. The building of fireplaces with chimneys was then made compulsory, to reduce wood-fuel. Consequently our house might have had an open fire, with everyone eating, working and sleeping together, with no full upper floor.



As the east end has less soot-blackened roof beams and a peculiar small arched window, it was probable that an upstairs half-floor had been built. **Fig 8**. This would allow the farm manager's family to sleep separately.



Anyway with fireplaces built, the upper space was utilised. Firstly beams were inserted across 25', to carry the weight of floor boarding; then spiral staircases, with small windows, were built at both ends. **Fig 9, Fig 10**. Finally windows were inserted. Our ground floor windows were probably bought from Abbey stone sales. They are identical to those in the Abbey porch, with diamond lights, ham stone mullions, lintels and dripstones. The upper windows were restorations (1800s). Long ago, the southern windows matched these, but were pulled out to allow increased light (1900s+).

Finally 30 years here have kept us busy, but we have a fantastic view and no ghosts!





Cerne Abbas is home to a thriving local cricket team, the Cerne Valley Cricket Club. The club was established in 1984, and the Cerne Historical Society wishes it every success in its 37th season. Yet Cerne Abbas' association with cricket stretches back considerably further than the 1980s. The first match to feature a village team was reported in the 1850s, but it is probable that local games were played prior to that date. Despite its long history, documentary evidence of the village's cricketing past is scarce. However, it is possible to trace the game's local development from the few details which were published in contemporary newspapers. Collectively, these provide a tantalising insight into sport in Victorian Cerne Abbas.



Three phases of cricketing activity can be identified in the village during the Victorian period. The first was a short-lived burst of enthusiasm for the game during the middle years of the 1850s. The earliest reported game of cricket to feature a team from Cerne Abbas appeared in August 1852 when eleven players from the village travelled to Bridport to face that town's club. The visitors lost the game, remarkably failing to register a single run in their innings! This game was followed by a handful of matches played in the years between 1855 and 1857, some of which were reported in local newspapers. But, unfortunately, the cricket team was not sustained and, after this brief period of activity, the Cerne side appears to have folded after the 1857 season.

Bridport and Cerne Abbas Cricket Clubs.—Monday last was appointed for a match between these two Clubs, which terminated in favor of the Bridport gentlemen, whose fielding, &c., was very superior; but extraordinary to relate, the Cerne gentlemen did not score a single run.



Cerne Abbas did not remain in the cricketing wilderness for long. On 9 June 1864, the *Dorset County Chronicle* proclaimed that the 'Cerne Cricket Club, which has been newly established this season, and has already made considerable progress in acquiring a knowledge of the noble game, are to play their first match at Cerne Abbas with the Blackmoor Vale club tomorrow'. The club was formed shortly after Edwin John Clark had returned to his home village to take up the licence at the New Inn and it is possible that these two events were connected – Clark became a regular player for the club, provided catering at its home games, and served as its secretary. The club played more regularly than its 1850s predecessor, arranging matches against teams from, among others, the Dorchester, Weymouth, and Blackmoor Vale clubs. A fixture was played each year at Minterne House against a team organised by Lord Digby's sons and, in September 1865, a contest between a 'Cerne Club XI' and a 'Cerne Town XVIII' was held (a possible forerunner of the present-day annual 'Village Match'?). However, published reports of the club's games grew fewer in number as the 1870s progressed, with its final reported game appearing in 1879. It is notable that Edwin Clark had died of tuberculosis, aged forty-four, three years previously and it may be that, deprived of his organisational abilities, the club lacked sufficient drive to continue for long.



Edwin J Clark



The third and final phase of cricket-playing in Victorian Cerne commenced with the formation of another village cricket club. The *Western Gazette* of 26 May 1882 informed its readers that ‘the lovers of the willow in this town [Cerne Abbas] have recently formed a club...it is to be hoped that the young gentlemen will speedily restore the lost prestige of the town in cricket’. This new club’s early seasons were not well documented, and it is only from 1889 that regular reports of its matches appeared in the local press. By then, the club was playing approximately ten games each season, always against Dorset-based opponents. This incarnation of the Cerne Cricket Club featured some extremely good players. Among these were seven members of the Clark family; Edwin and Herbert Clark – both of whom were the sons of the deceased Edwin John Clark – and their cousins, brothers William, Frank, Joseph Benwell, Alfred and Henry Clark. For at least one game in 1890, the Cerne team included five Clarks. In another, versus Charminster in 1889, Henry Clark top-scored for Cerne with 29 runs and took twelve wickets during their opponent’s two innings. Another accomplished local player was the village physician, Dr Ernest Dalton, who, on his arrival in Cerne in 1889, was immediately installed into the club’s first team and remained an active local cricketer for many years after. Although Cerne acquired a reputation of being one of Dorset’s better village clubs during the 1890s, it proved incapable of maintaining this status into the Edwardian period as reflected in its reduced list of fixtures. A single reference has been found to a club match being played in 1902 and, with no further records of the club yet found, it is to be assumed that it was disbanded that year.



Joseph Benwell Clark (self portrait)



Henry Clark



Throughout the three periods, almost all of the Cerne Cricket Club’s home matches were played on a pitch at the summit of Black Hill, which was ‘kindly lent’ by the farmer of Barton Farm. Joseph Benwell Clark later recalled how, in the early 1880s, Cerne’s cricketers improved the pitch by levelling and returfing the ground. Clark also mentions how, in 1883, timbers were salvaged from the recently-dismantled Methodist Chapel in Mill Lane and used to build a new pavilion on Black Hill. (The suggestion that the chapel’s pulpit might also be removed to the cricket pitch to provide a box for the scorer was rejected for being too sacrilegious!). The pavilion is shown on a contemporary Ordnance Survey map of the village (see illustration). The inaccessibility of the cricket pitch was, jokingly, cited as the club’s secret weapon – having climbed the hill, visiting teams were said to be exhausted before the game had begun! Yet, despite this apparent ‘advantage’, the Black Hill pitch was not in good condition. In 1891, the club secretary complained that ‘if they could only get their ground in to a more playable condition they would play more matches and would be more successful’. But any efforts made to find an alternative venue proved fruitless, and Black Hill was retained as the club’s home ground.



Seemingly, playing the game was only part of the attraction of joining the village's cricket clubs. Matches were also highly convivial, day-long social occasions. In 1856, after an away game at Stalbridge, the Cerne team were treated to an evening of food and drink at the town's Hind Inn, accompanied by a brass band and communal singing, which continued until the visiting team left for home, conveyed by a four-horse coach, at 11.00pm. A 'refreshment tent' was regularly erected on Black Hill at matches during the 1880s and 90s, for which 'occasional licences' were issued to permit the sale of 'intoxicating liquors'. Also, a day's play included a lengthy lunch break between innings where cold food and beer was provided to both the two teams and any spectators willing to pay for it. The effect that this had on the standard of post-prandial play is unknown.



One of the benefits of cricket often cited by the Victorians, beyond the exercise it provided, was that, as the game was played by members of all classes, it acted to encourage social harmony. The players that appeared for the various Cerne cricket clubs were, however, not particularly diverse. Most were drawn from the families of local tradesmen, small businessmen and the village's middle class, while agricultural workers – of which Cerne had many – were rarely selected. This is hardly surprising; few that were employed in farming were afforded the opportunity to spend a whole day – and the two-innings games ordinarily lasted from 11.00am until 6.30pm – playing cricket.



Their participation was restricted still further by the club playing matches on irregular days – games could be played on any day of the week, except on Sundays. In contrast, the self-employed, shop-based and the more-leisured and wealthier villagers were able to exercise a relatively greater degree of control over their working hours. In Cerne, cricket did not present many opportunities for inter-class mixing.

Considering the game's national popularity during the period, it is surprising that Cerne Abbas would be without an organised cricket club for the two decades following 1902. However, local cricket was revived after the end of the First World War with the formation of the Uperne Cricket Club, which played its matches at the foot of Seldon Hill, in 1921. Instrumental in the club's formation was the, by then, fifty-eight-year-old Dr Dalton, and featured among the players were some similarly ageing members of the Clark family, providing an element of continuity linking the local twentieth-century game with Cerne's Victorian cricketing heyday.



The contributions made to the research for this article by two descendants of the cricket-playing Clarks – Peter Clark and Graham Clark – is gratefully acknowledged.





The OSL dates are unexpected, but scientifically, as far as the OSL science is concerned, they are "as good as it can get" from this type of relatively poor quartz deposits. Further the two sets of dates (for pre or early Giant AD 910 + AD 980 (AD 650-1310) (see below) are statistically indistinguishable from each other and the second set being of some of the earliest/contemporary hillwash against the giant (AD 1240 and AD 1250 (AD 90-1510) are also statistically indistinguishable making this a very robust set of results, and showing the Giant is Early Medieval.

Post-dating the Giant

Trench C, r. elbow	hillwash downslope	CEAB 03	AD 1250	(AD 990-1510)
Trench B, r. foot	hillwash upslope against Giant	CEAB 06	AD 1240	(AD 1080-1400)

Pre or contemporary with the Giant

Trench C, r. elbow	Lowest chalking of the Giant	CEAB 01	AD 980	(AD 650-1310)
Trench B, r. root	early predate hillwash downslope	CEAB 05	AD 910	(AD 700-1100)

The dates ... an explanation: all absolute dates (i.e., radiocarbon measurements, thermoluminescence dates and OSL) are never single calendar dates, but the most likely range during which event occurred. These are probabilities, and we usually quote results at the 95% probability. For radiocarbon results the probability distributions, for instance are sometimes bimodal, so the central or average, point is the least not most likely! For our OSL result the ranges are quoted and these should be used in understanding the Giant's chronology. The results in each pair are statistically indistinguishable, therefore, the fact one seems slightly earlier than is purely semantic – in each pair one is not statically earlier than the other - they are, in reality, the same and we have dated two events.

Last year, after the excavation and processing of the soil samples, I had indicated that the presence of some of the "Introduced" land snails (probably *Cernuella virgata* and *Candidula gigaxii*) are species that were inadvertently brought into the British Isles (possibly in straw and hay being used as packing freight onboard ships). This group of microscopic (2-4mm) snails are thought to have been brought into this country, and 'colonised' the landscape in the 'medieval period', Without any precise dates for that introduction we use the date fairly loosely and generally mean post-Roman. In which case, *contra* to some views, their presence does not contradict the OSL dates. The main reason for studying the snails is to determine the changing land-use and landscape that the Giant inhabits, and thus place him into the changing landscapes to which he belongs.

Martin's excellent excavation and section drawings show that his outline has always been recut exactly the same in all four locations we excavated, only drifting downhill in very recent times (late 20th-21st century). [We will be able to share this with you when our analysis of the formation of the layers is complete and the National Trust have drawn up the section drawings].

So, the National Trust has very successfully achieved their prime objective, and had it not been for their careful curation, and management under their ownership/guardianship, it is possible that some of this data could have been destroyed or lost.

What the results do, however is leave some other points to ponder. For instance, we know the Giant is early medieval in outline at least (like the Long Man of Wilmington – AD 1515-1570, OSL mean of 4 results 1545±30 AD, and AD 2000-800, 1420±620 AD,) but we cannot be sure if the internal features are contemporary (i.e. eyes, mouth, ribs and phallus) or whether these were later additions and embellishments.

The Giant seems then to have 'gone to sleep', and he was not reported or noticed for a number of centuries. Most notable is the absence in both John Leland's notes on Cerne Abbey in AD 1542 (Smith 1907-10) and John Norden's excellent survey of 1617, of any mention of the Giant! If the Giant was a prominent figure, surely then he would have been recorded. Regardless of whether he was an outline or a fully embellished figure, it seems that the Giant was not a clear and maintained figure by the 16th and 17th centuries!

It is possible that after being cut in the early medieval period, that he was neglected; the chalk becoming green with moss and grass, and eventually growing over with longer herbaceous (grassy) vegetation. The chalk outline was no longer a striking figure, though in the right light he would still have been visible (proven by the fact that he was always recut on exactly the same line).

Then in the 18th century he was recut, and the outline cut on exactly the same line, so he must have been visible close up if you knew what you were looking for. Whether he was just re-cleaned and re-awakened, or was revised we can't be sure, but by 1693 and 1763 he's back. We have in the samples we took, the potential to address a number of these questions (but dating the internal elements (as above) would require further excavation and sampling).

More to study

We need to examine the deposits geoarchaeologically and archaeologically to understand their formation. Those accumulating against the figure on the upslope side are obviously hillwash; those present on the downslope side against the Giant are more difficult to be as precise about at present (staked turfs, ants nests, hillwash, chalk soiled from the figure, former soils? We need also to review the dates in relation to not just the list of dated events at Cerne Abbas and the Abbey, but to the wider history, politics and ideology's from the 9th to 18th centuries. We need to define the likelihood of the Giant being present before, or after certain ideologies were in vogue in the society as a whole. Only then will his significance, or even reason, be likely to emerge.

Archaeological science studies on the soils, sediments and more importantly the microscopic land snail fragments may provide further important and interesting information which might help explain some of these mysteries. The snail evidence may provide confirmation of this subtle change from short grazed grass and white chalk, to longer, damp and tussocky ungrazed or only lightly grazed grass which with moss and vegetation over the exposed chalk obscured the chalk figure. We have a number of soil samples of different types; the analysis of some might help corroborate this idea of vegetation growth (i.e. chemical analysis of soil magnetic susceptibility, pH or other soil chemical properties, that can be analysed in my AEA laboratory).

When the National Trust start on their post-excavation analysis (such as the identification of wooden stakes which could be 21st century, 20th century, or older) and commission a programme of archaeological science (soils, sediments and snails) they will be able to write / re-write a new chapter in our understanding of the Giant. But there is still much to do...

Reference: Smith, L.T. 1907-10. *The itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543*, parts I to XI, London





It is 25 years since I published my findings on the Cerne Giant – interpreting him as an ancient British icon of a tribal protector-god – and proposed OSL dating of the oldest surviving silts in the outline trench. (*The Cerne Giant* 1996 Dorset Publishing Company, Wincanton) David Thackray, the National Trust's regional archaeologist, nominated me co-ordinator of the next research phase jointly with Martin Papworth, who was to try to secure funding. A problem in seeking funding was that we had good reason to doubt the survival of ancient silts. David Thackray had overseen the 1979 scouring and he feared the trench might have been completely cleaned out at that time. David Miles, who successfully OSL dated the Uffington White Horse, expressed similar doubts. In 2020, the Trust itself decided to fund OSL dating, at the same places on the figure that I proposed 25 years ago, the likeliest to trap sediment. As luck would have it, the 1979 scouring had cleared only the upper half of the accumulated silts, so evidence of several older re-cuttings survived below.

The recently published OSL date, AD 700-1100, represents the emplacement of the lowest surviving silt and it is possible that, as in 1979, earlier silts were scraped out before the 'late Anglo-Saxon' chalk rubble was tamped in. So the Giant may have been created earlier, and an origin in AD 500 or 600 would be possible. This makes a significant difference to the way the figure may be interpreted. The seventeenth century scenario has to be abandoned, and my late Iron Age theory looks unlikely – though still not impossible. Do we need a new explanation, or can we adapt an existing explanation?

The OSL date is Anglo-Saxon in terms of period, without proving that the Giant is Anglo-Saxon in ethnicity or culture. The Giant is not recognizable as an Anglo-Saxon deity. Here is a speculative scenario. An Anglo-Saxon elite seized power and took over land ownership in Dorset in the seventh century, while a substantial British serf population of pre-Saxon stock of Durotrigian descent carried on working under it. Some traditions and beliefs from the late Iron Age would have survived in Dorset through the Roman occupation and into the sixth and seventh centuries. This means that a hill figure created then might still represent an archaic British tribal god.

If the Cerne Giant was created between AD 500 and 700, who was the image intended to represent? Why was he put there? The proximity of the pagan Giant to the site of Cerne Abbey worries some people. It is very unlikely that the pagan image was created *after* the abbey was founded in 978. This means the date range indicated by OSL for the oldest surviving outline silts may be narrowed to AD 700-978. Many people assume the abbot would not have tolerated the presence of a pagan image, but tolerances shift through time.

The great scholar Aelfric was chosen to be abbot of Cerne in 989, a prolific writer as well as a liberal and humane teacher. He was also a great story-teller with a taste for the bizarre, including devils, idols and a terrifying giant. Aelfric might have welcomed the presence of a pagan image, believing people should have the Devil to turn to as an alternative. There had to be a free choice between God and Devil to make choosing God a virtue, and in the Cerne Giant the Devil was available as a visible temptation. It is easy to imagine Aelfric using the Giant as a teaching aid, leading his pupils up the hill and showing them the alternative. He makes his pupils in the *Colloquy* say, 'we want to turn away from evil and do good.'

Pagan images and temples existed in sixth century England. Gildas, writing in about 540, possibly in Dorset, mentions 'devilish monstrosities' of pagan cult images still to be seen in the countryside. In 601 Pope Gregory sent advice to St Augustine, deciding 'on the matter of the English that the temples of the idols in that nation ought not to be destroyed.' To receive this advice, Augustine must first have reported seeing temples and idols. Gregory's advice was to set up shop close to them because they were the places where followers of the old religion were accustomed to worship. The location chosen for Cerne Abbey, sandwiched between a pagan idol and a sacred spring, is therefore significant.

William of Malmesbury told a story about a confrontation between St Augustine and pagans living at Cerne in 600-603. The villagers at Cerne drove him and his followers out. The same story told by Gotselin in about 1091 mentioned a *typus*, a bas-relief figure on a wall, which describes the image of the Giant very well. Gotselin referred to the image as 'the figure of Helia'.

Martin Papworth is uncomfortable with the thought of the Giant coexisting with a Christian community, resurrecting an idea of Tim Darvill's, that the Giant was made by a pagan community, then became overgrown through neglect. Eventually the faint outline in the grass was noticed and recut. But even a grassed-over hill figure remains visible. The Long Man of Wilmington was marked out in orange bricks in the 1550s and subsequently neglected. A 1710 drawing shows the Long Man with a dotted outline – after 150 years of neglect. He remained a grassed-over Green Man until re-bricking in the 1870s. Even 300 years of neglect left an image that was intermittently visible; importantly, no-one forgot that he was there. A Green Giant at Cerne could not have escaped notice either. Significantly, the 2020 excavations showed no sign of a hiatus in the Giant's maintenance.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about the dating is that it proves a hill figure can remain in position on a steep chalk hill side for over a thousand years – without moving down the slope more than 10-20cm. Professor Martin Bell once almost convinced me that an ancient origin was impossible for either the Long Man or the Cerne Giant because of the gradual movement of soil downslope. It was a persuasive argument. Yet the 2020 excavations on the Cerne Giant prove that the four sample points on the outline, the elbows and feet, have remained in the same places and, equally startlingly, to within a few centimetres the outline has remained the same width as when it was made.

In other respects the date is not surprising. The image is pre-Christian in spirit and, as I argued in my 1996 book and in subsequent talks, it is likely to represent the tribal guardian-god of the British people of this part of Dorset, ever-ready to fight for them and overcome their enemies.

I tentatively suggest that the image may have been created in the sixth or seventh centuries as a last-ditch attempt to fend off the relentless encroachment of the Anglo-Saxons. But there was another enemy – Christianity - and the depiction of the ancient guardian-god may have been part of the resistance to conversion. St Augustine visited Cerne in around 600, and the Saxons succeeded in capturing East Dorset in the 650s. This double crisis for the native Britons in Dorset could have been the moment when the portrait of the ancient god went up, perhaps as a desperate call to arms.

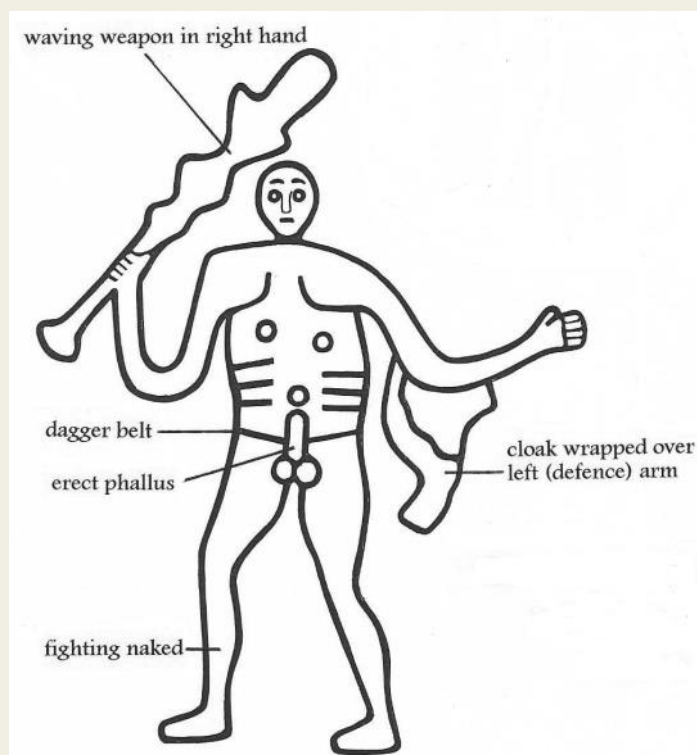


Fig. 1 A reconstructed Giant

The Giant as he might have appeared in the seventh century, a portrayal of the tribal protector-god of this part of Dorset. Several features are specific references back to iron age warrior images – they are not Anglo-Saxon.

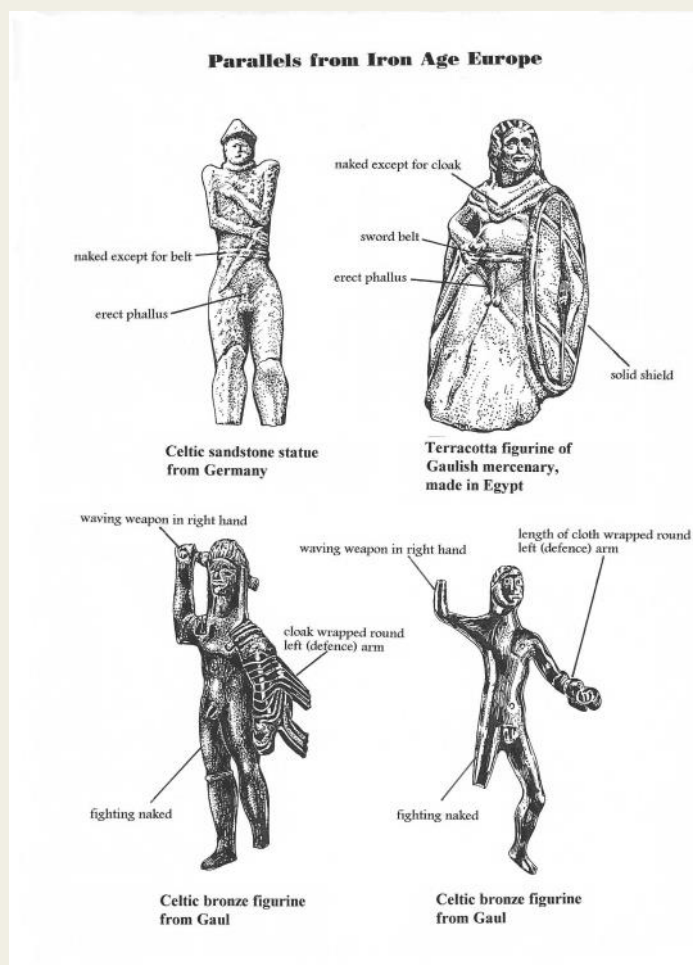


Fig. 2. Iron age parallels





Bob Foulser

Speculation on the Date & Meaning of the Cerne Giant

On May 11th 2021 the National Trust gave a private talk to the Cerne Abbas Historical Society previewing the results of their work to date the monument using an analysis of snail types and optically stimulated luminescence. The Giant had been dated variously from the Iron Age to seventeenth century but no one had expected their result which dated the Giant to AD 700 – 1100. So what was happening around this period that could have prompted the laborious task of making the monument?



National Trust taking samples from Cerne Giant

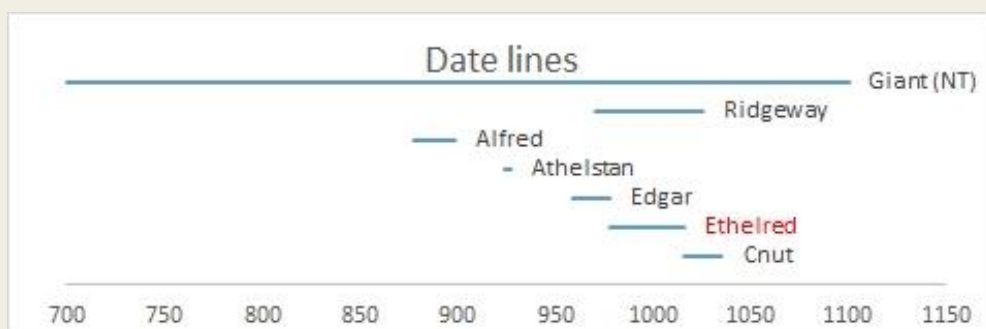
The Viking burial at Ridgeway Hill ⁱⁱ, about 5 miles South of Cerne Abbas, was discovered in 2009. It contained 54 decapitated skeletons stripped of any belongings and dated to between AD 970 and 1025. One victim had filed teeth and all were murdered and beheaded methodically so they were almost certainly warriors rather than victims of the St Brice's Day Massacre ordered by Ethelred in AD 1002. A single long ship had a company of 50 or more men and, since a Viking raid would probably comprise several ships, those individuals buried at the Ridgeway were very likely only part of a much larger body of Viking warriors. The fact that the victims showed no sign of combat injuries suggests that they were a rear guard, protecting their ships but who ultimately surrendered to an overwhelming force. This raises the question of what happened to the remainder.



Ridgeway Burial site

Viking raids on Britain began around 787 when three long ships made landfall at Portland. Over subsequent years the Vikings settled in the North-East of England and expanded South and West. It was not until the battle of Edington in 878 that King Alfred was able to arrest their expansion and found the Anglo Saxon kingdom of Wessex. Alfred subsequently set up a system of fortified settlements to combat Viking invaders thus allowing a period of relative peace and prosperity during which Athelstan (AD 924-939) became the king of a united England. This stability continued through to King Edgar (959-978) who established the administrative system of the hundreds and, incidentally, founded the first monastery in Cerne Abbas. After Edgar, the reign of Ethelred the Unready (AD 978-1016) was a disaster during which the Vikings were able to pillage and extract tribute. In 982 they ravaged Portland and in 998 they sailed up the river Frome and ran riot through Dorset. Ethelred was followed by Edmund Ironside (AD 1016-1016) who ceded the Kingdom to the Dane Cnut (AD 1016-1035).

The National Trust date interval covers all these events but it now seems likely that the crucial period for dating the Giant is towards the end of the reign of Ethelred.



In AD 1015, before Cnut became king of England, a Viking raid under Cnut destroyed Sherborne Abbey, Cerne Abbey, Wimborne Minster and St Martin's Church in Wareham. It is possible that the earlier Ridgeway raid had similar objectives and that is what occupied the larger part of the Viking force. Perhaps they were on their way to Sherborne up through the Cerne Valley but were attacked and destroyed near Cerne.

The location therefore suggests that the Giant may have been constructed as a victory monument related to the Ridgeway discovery. The Giant's overall stance is like that of a victorious warrior: he wields a lethal looking club (could it once have been a sword?), he displays his virility and there is evidence that over his left arm there was a cloak and his left hand held a severed head that may be references to the fact that of the Ridgeway victims had been stripped naked and decapitated.

An interesting speculation? The National Trust's Dr Martin Papworth's view: "Your explanation is as good as any at the moment".^{vii}

Editor's note: The References in Bob's article have been omitted due to lack of space. If you wish to read them, please use the contact form on the website.





The old black and white photograph shown in the article about tanning in Cerne Abbas in the last issue of the CHS online magazine was given to Pauline and me by some old friends, Nicholas and Vicky Keeble, when we bought the property in 2018. Vicky spent her early life as a teenager and young adult living at the Tanyard, so knows it very well, but has no memory of how the photo came into her possession, and no knowledge of who the couple in the photo are.

As a result of my research into the history of the tanning operation, and with the help of census records and other valuable information given to me by George Mortimer, we can say that the photograph was probably taken at the end of the 19thC, and it's likely that the photographer was RD Barrett of Bridport, who was known for his photography of village scenes and country folk of the time. From census records, we also know that it is likely that the couple outside the cottage where they lived at the time, now our house and known as the Tanyard, were Mr Daniel Cheeseman and his wife Harriet. Daniel was one of the last employees of the tannery, and Harriet was a glover.

Behind Daniel we can see that the wall of the building shows similarities to the present day, the main differences being the thatched roof (burned in 1960) and the doorway which is now a window. The structure behind Harriet has been rebuilt rather differently. I believe our house once was a terrace of three cottages, and there was even a fourth on the east end of the building, where the garage now stands.



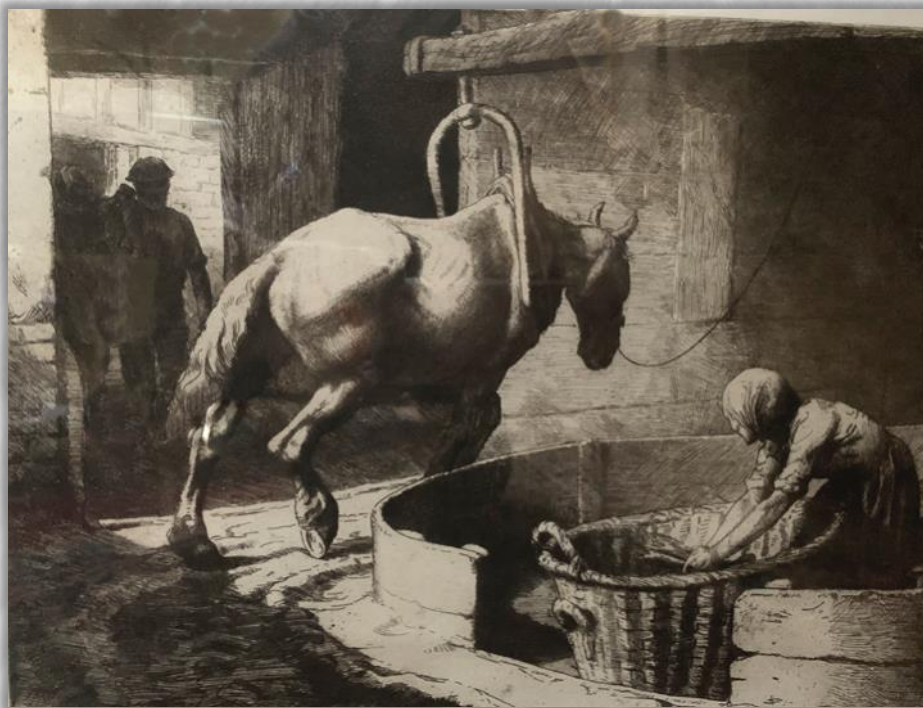
Daniel & Harriet



Robin & Pauline

In response to the article, I also heard from Graham Clark in New Zealand, a descendant of Cerne Abbas artist Joseph Benwell Clark (1857 – 1938), who sent me an extract from Joseph's beautifully descriptive diaries, which describes the milling of the oak bark used in the tanning process, a scene still clear in the memories of people living in the village at the time.

"Within the memory of older inhabitants of Cerne today (Dec 1925) there were two bark mills working in the tan-yards, one driven by water power at the lower yard and the other a one horse power machine in Acreman Street. The horse attached to a large beam walking round and round the interior of an out-building turned the mill which was built on the lines of a coffee mill suitable for the giant. Oak trees grown in the Vale of Blackmore provided the bark which was made into large stacks and when dry and curled up like cinnamon was ready for the milling process. It was then thrown into the top of the machine and torn to a fibrous condition when it was ready for the pits. It was then taken up from the foot of the mill in large wooden shovels to be borne away in huge baskets by two men (placed through the handles at the top of the basket was a pole) which the bearers rested on their shoulders, on their return journey bringing more bark for the mill. One remembers that a fine dust pervaded these mills making a golden haze where the slanting rays of sunlight shone in at the open door. There was a legend that these tanner's men were so well tanned during life that after death they did not decompose".



Horse driven bark mill: Joseph Benwell Clark

Daniel Cheesman was a Cerne man; he was aged 60 in 1891, and died in 1917 aged 86. Harriet died in 1908 aged 76. They had 5 children, and are buried in Cerne churchyard. Given the average life expectancy at the turn of the 19thC was 47 for men, and about 50 for women, we can perhaps agree with the legend mentioned in Benwell Clark's diary, that a working life as a tanner at the very least did no harm to Mr Cheeseman, and that his wife also enjoyed long life.





June



At five o'clock on the morning of 28 June 1838, the inhabitants of Cerne Abbas were roused from their slumbers by a peal of bells and a Royal Salute being fired from the tower of the village's parish church. The dawn cannonade was launched to signal the start of the festivities held in celebration of the coronation of Queen Victoria. Victoria, then aged eighteen, had ascended to the throne on the death of her uncle, William IV, in the previous year, but the organisation required to stage a coronation took some considerable time. Beyond the formal ceremony, procession and accompanying pomp that formed the celebrations in London there were numerous, if more modest, events held in towns and villages throughout the Kingdom.

Cerne Abbas was no exception. The village sought to mark Coronation Day in memorable style. Most of its houses were decorated with evergreens, with Abbey Street, which was reported to be 'completely covered with laurels', particularly resplendent. In addition, a number of temporary triumphal arches had been erected across the width of several of its streets, accompanied by banners bearing patriotic slogans such as 'Long live Victoria!' and 'Victoria! May thy reign be long and prosperous!'. In addition, the parish priest, the Rev. John Davis, oversaw two church services held at St Mary's during the day, one at held at 10.30 in the morning with a further service during the afternoon.

This latter was followed, at 2.30pm, by a procession by the residents through the principal streets of the village.



Franz Xaver Winterhalter
1859

Edmond Thomas Parris 1838



But for many, the highlight of the day came later in the afternoon. The procession itself culminated with its arrival at Abbey Street where, during the morning, fourteen tables had been set out along its length, stretching from the Abbey House down to the Market House. On their arrival, the villagers were greeted by a local tanner, Mr James Hellyar, who entreated everyone present to be seated. After Hellyar said Grace, all present were treated to an excellent dinner. It was estimated that approximately 840 people attended the feast who, according to the *Dorset County Chronicle*, included 'the gentlemen, tradesmen and poor of the town'. Considering that the parish population of Cerne Abbas in 1841 was recorded as 1,342, it appears that almost two-thirds of the village's residents were served that day. It was reported that 'a cloudless sky enhanced the beauty of the scene' and that 'the utmost harmony, peace and goodwill prevailed throughout'. It is doubtful whether the caterers shared in these sentiments.

The festivities continued into the evening. A particularly noteworthy event occurred when the village saddler Thomas Dunning inflated two 'beautiful' balloons – presumably of some considerable size – which he released into the night sky to the delight of assembled crowd. Elsewhere, Mr and Mrs Hart invited a 'select group' of the local elite to their home to enjoy music and dancing which continued to an early hour. Dancing was also a feature of a tea party held in an especially constructed booth 'for the females of the town'.

The wish expressed on one of Cerne's 1838 banners – that the new Queen should have a long and prosperous reign – was realised. Victoria was to sit on the throne for almost sixty-four years and, in the early part of her reign, Britain consolidated its position as the world's leading industrial power. But among the many achievements of the Victorian period, one of the more remarkable, and most overlooked, was the ability of Cerne Abbas to provide a full dinner for 840 people in a single sitting.



Sir George Hayter 1838

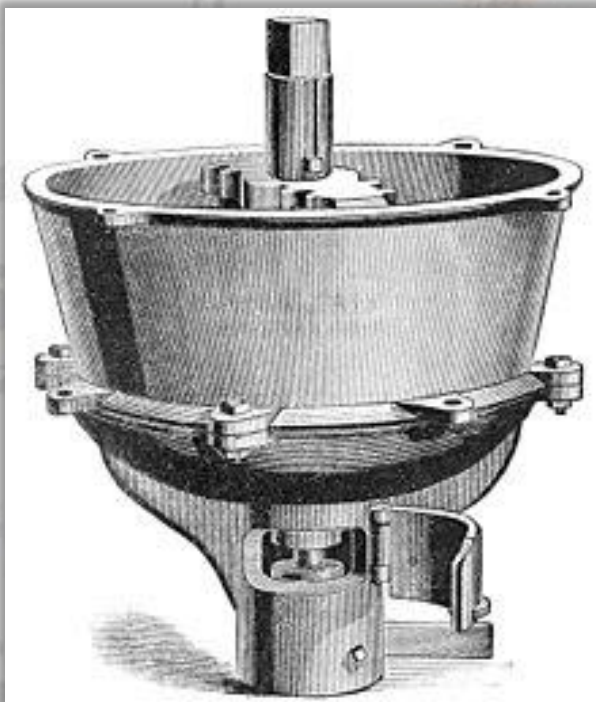


11 July 1877. In the Spring edition of the *Cerne Historical Society Magazine*, Robin Mills provided a vivid depiction of tanning, one of the principal industries of Victorian Cerne Abbas. His account described the gory, smelly and polluting tasks undertaken in the process of curing animal hides. It seems, in addition, that working at a tanyard was a potentially dangerous occupation.

This is illustrated by the horrific story of Benjamin 'Benji' Groves. Groves, who was born in Cerne Abbas in 1825, spent the first fifty years living with his parents at their family home in Acreman Street and, if he were alive today, he would be described as having learning difficulties. As recorded in the annual censuses, Benji held a variety of labouring jobs, mainly in agriculture. But, by the mid-1870s, he had been hired by Mr Hellyar (the son of the benevolent dinner provider mentioned above) to help out at his tanyard. As Robin mentioned, oak bark contains a high concentration of tannin and was widely used in the tanning process, and it was Groves' task to crush the bark that had been stripped from the felled oak trees.



Acreman St c1890s



To achieve this, he and his workmates used a large cutting machine, described by Joseph Benwell Clark as being 'made like a large coffee mill'. On 11 July, 1877, while feeding the machine, Groves lost his footing, fell in and received severe lacerations to his hands. The report of the incident in the *Western Gazette* described how Groves was 'promptly conveyed to the Dorset County Hospital, where he received every attention, but so serious were the injuries that it was found necessary to amputate both hands'.

A Bark Mill similar to types used in the UK



What happened subsequently provides an insight to the Victorian welfare system and its treatment of poverty and disability. Unable to work, and with no modern-day benefit payments available, Groves initially became a charity case. It was reported that his surgeon and the hospital's chaplain 'beg to commend to the charitable public the exceptional case of Benjamin Groves' who had been rendered 'utterly helpless' after his accident. The two launched a fundraising appeal aimed at providing the poor man with 'artificial hands and arms at a considerable cost, so as to enable him to feed himself'. Within a fortnight, an impressive sum of almost £50 had been donated, and the details of the benefactors' charity were noted in the local press. Lord Rivers contributed £5, the local MPs Erle Drax and Portman donated two guineas and £2 respectively, Lord Digby and the Earl of Shaftesbury both gave £2. The amount raised was more than sufficient to cover the cost of the prosthetic limbs.

THE LATE APPEAL.—The House-Surgeon of the Dorset County Hospital begs to acknowledge with thanks the following sums in aid of the unfortunate man Benjamin Groves, of Cerne Abbas, who is rendered totally unable to assist himself in the slightest degree by the loss of both arms in a machine accident:—Board of Guardians of Cerne Abbas, £10; Lord Rivers, £5; Dr. F. Bissett Hawkins, £2; General Sir H. Shirley, K.C.B., £2; Mr. R. B. Sheridan, £2; Colonel Digby, Chalmington, £2; Earl of Shaftesbury, £2; Mr. J. W. Erle Drax, M.P., £2 2s.; Lord Digby, £2; the Misses Churchill, Colliton Park, £3; Mr. W. H. B. Portman, M.P., £2; Colonel Oldfield, £1 1s.; Mr. E. W. Williams, £1; Mr. J. A. Williams, £1; Mr. H. B. Middleton, £1; Miss C. Dashwood.

Southern Times 6 Oct 1877 p6



Although these contributions were exceedingly generous, they were, in effect, a charitable one-off payment. In the longer term, the prospects for Groves, a manual worker now unable to work, were bleak. After his mother died in 1879 – his father had been deceased since 1873 – Benjamin had little choice but to enter the Cerne Union Workhouse. This is where he was recorded living in the Censuses of both 1881 and 1891. Originally, the role of the workhouse had been to set the poor and needy to productive work in return for rudimentary board and lodging, paid for by local

ratepayers. In reality, it took only a short while for these institutions to be populated by people – the elderly, the disabled, single mothers and their children – who were largely incapable of work. Certainly, Benji Groves would not have been in a position to contribute much to the economic output of the Cerne Workhouse. Instead, Groves was destined to see out his final years in a pauper's institution, sited a few hundred yards from his boyhood home. Benjamin Groves died in the Cerne Workhouse in 1893, aged 68.

August



Despite hoping otherwise, by the summer of 1937 many Britons were growing increasingly aware of the probability of war with Nazi Germany. Acting on this awareness, an enlightened few resolved to develop strategies to prepare their local communities to cope with the consequences of the imminent conflict. One such forward thinker was Colonel Philip Robert Bald of Barton Lodge, Cerne Abbas. Bald took the lead in developing an air-raid precaution scheme for the village. When this was published in the August of that year, the *Western Gazette* was much impressed with his efforts, hailing it as 'a model for other villages of similar size'.

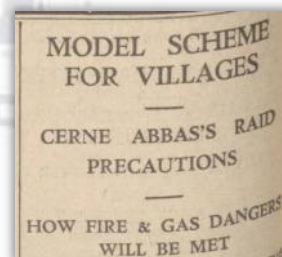
The actions prescribed by Bald's strategy reveal much about the perceived threats that rural communities such as Cerne faced. It identified the principal wartime threat, initially at least, as coming from aerial attack. Bald predicted that, although unlikely to be a target itself, Cerne might anticipate the 'dropping of an odd bomb or two from an aeroplane being chased away from a more important objective'. Consequently, he drew up plans for dealing with firefighting, demolition of damaged buildings, the repair of roads, the treatment of the wounded and 'generally to prevent suffering and the loss of life through ignorance'. Air raids were to be announced by the church bells being rung 'in accordance with prearranged signals' and by three blasts of a policeman's whistle. Messengers would be sent to alert those in more remote locations. The Fire Brigade and the village's first aid parties would then be mustered.



Ministry of Home Security

But the greater part of Bald's planning focused on how the village should respond to a gas attack. Gas had been deployed against troops serving in the previous war and it was assumed – incorrectly as it turned out – that it would feature in future attacks on civilians. Nationally, 38m gasmasks were issued to the civilian population and phone boxes were painted with special red paint which turned green when in contact with gas. The threat was taken no less seriously at the local level. Bald anticipated that Cerne was at risk from 'the drifting of gas into the parish on the breeze from bombs dropped far outside it'. Each household was urged to prepare a 'gas proof room' in which doors and windows would be sealed with tape and 'gas-proof clothing' was to be issued to those that required it. Villagers would be alerted to a gas attack by the ringing of the church bell - anyone not at home was expected to 'move on to a hill and upwind until the gas, which is heavier than air, has cleared'. Livestock should, it was advised, also to be moved uphill where all beasts should be scattered rather than herded – a move intended to avoid the loss of an entire flock or herd.

It is not known how often Bald's plans for civil defence were actioned, but their publication, two years in advance of the declaration of hostilities, may have served to both alarm Cerne's population and to provide reassurance that some control was, to an extent, being exerted over the uncertainties of the future. Bald was later to continue his work in Dorset's 'home front' by serving as a commanding officer in the local Home Guard, while also acting as a Churchwarden in Cerne Abbas throughout the war. He died, aged 68, at Marylebone in 1951.



Western Gazette 20
Aug 1937





Andrew Popkin

This column is for items that have been lost or thrown out, but which you have found.



This issue features some photographs which have turned up on social media, and George has delved further...



Jonathan Hardy, sexton

Jonathan Hardy was buried 23 February 1917. There is something rather poetic about a 'Late Sexton (gravedigger) of Cerne Burial Board' having his grave dug by his successor in the post. He was born 1829 in Cerne, baptised in St Mary's 28 March 1829, to George and Sophia. George was a carpenter. Jonathan married Mary Peach from Batcombe in 1852 and they went on to have at last 4 children. Jonathan became a Cordwainer or shoemaker, but by 1891 he was the Sexton. He lived at various addresses in Cerne, including Dorchester Road and the Folly, but in 1911 he was living as a widower with his son, John, in Long Street. It must be assumed he died while living with his son.



Present day location of photograph

6	Hardy Jonathan	Late Sexton of Cerne - male	87	Cerne Abbas	23 Feb 1917	Road at Malenay	Common Interment 1404	Yes
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A postcard of the Wesleyan Chapel in Long St., Cerne, previously unseen by us.

Dorset County Museum, some years ago, suggested that photographs with numbers such as 'Cerne 361' might be those by a Walter Pouncy who was active from the 1890s to 1914.

The photograph below, in our collection, dated to 27 July 1908 shows the Forresters' Parade with the Royal Oak sign in the chapel photo in place by then, so it may have been taken early to mid 1900s.



Forresters' Parade in Long St., Cerne



Edwardian Wesleyan Sunday School in Cerne



Postcard: Old Union Arms, Acreman St, c1930s?



c 1997, Rev Ray Nichols, Xmas Eve Crib service attributed to Richard Hartley Sharp



Harriet Still, studying MSt Building History at Cambridge University, was asked to make a brief comment.

"This roof is in a bit of a state! It has been reinforced and the ceiling has been taken out. You can see the king post roof structure, which has a shallower pitch than a domestic house because churches are traditionally covered in lead (which sheds water better than other roofing materials). The tie beams have been braced with wood and iron strapping, at the ends. Where they aren't reinforced, you can see where the ceiling joists originally sat in them, supporting a plaster ceiling. Ceiling with plaster was a luxury until about 1750/1800, and only the fancy moulded beams (like the one at the far end) would have been visible from the church below. Otherwise, it would have been a flat white plaster."



From the CHS Archives

In January 1959 the architect, a Mr Robert Potter from Salisbury, surveyed the church as part of the routine Quinquennial inspection of churches. He marvelled that the roof was still in position and advised its entire reconstruction. He also found dry rot in the wooden flooring which required a complete new concrete base throughout the church. The pews had been similarly attacked by dry rot and these were also taken out.

The opportunity was taken to install a modern heating system. Work started in March 1960 and the parish was offered the use of the Congregational Chapel for worship.

On 2 May 1960 a giant crane hoisted huge reinforced concrete beams of the new roof into position, at which point reconstruction could begin.

During the work, the cartouches in the nave were discovered under lime wash and restored. There are photos of the reconstruction and restoration, of variable quality.

The work was completed for a special Service of Thanksgiving on Whitsunday 21 May 1961 with the reopening by the Bishop of Salisbury.

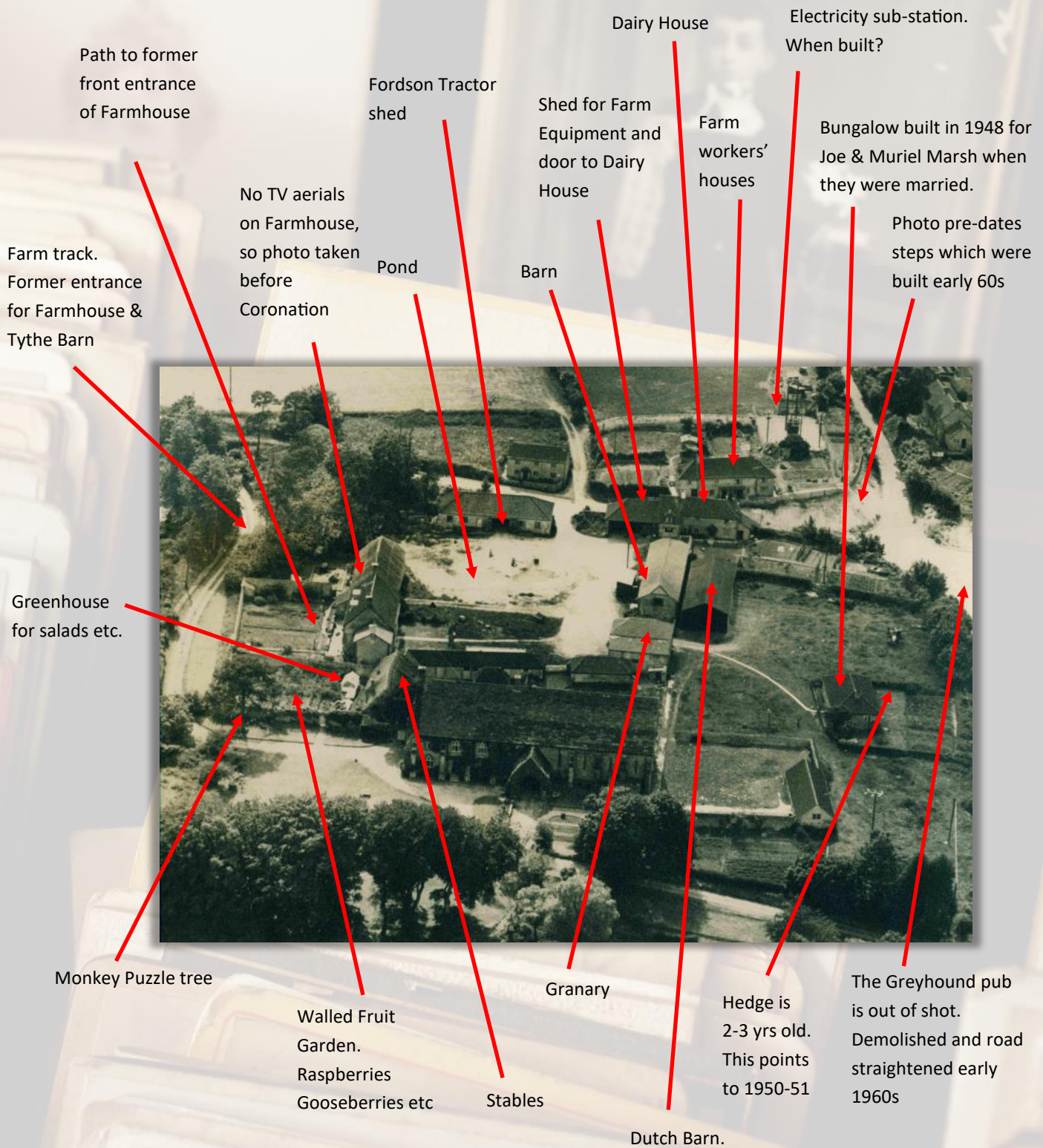
At the time the appeal was launched by the Revd Cyril Taylor in 1959, he was asking for £7,500. By August 1963 £15,200 had been raised and over £1000 was still needed. We must assume he found it!



The Bartlets' aerial view of Barton Farm.

What year was it taken?

*Sue & Alf Mansel share their memories and take an educated guess
at 1950-51*





Letters

Edited by George Mortimer

Rodney Castleden writes:

I've looked at the earlier issues of the magazine online, and I'm impressed by both the quality of the articles and the presentation. It's beautifully designed.

Best wishes

Editor's Note: we are indebted to Rodney for his article 'Dating the Cerne Giant' in this issue of the Magazine.

By the Editor

The Historical Society received the following email on 27 April from the USA. It concerns the medals of Charles Damen who is recorded on the Cerne Abbas war memorial as killed in action at Gallipoli in WW1.

'I have Charles Damen's medals from WWI. He emigrated to Melbourne Australia, enlisted 12th September 1914, embarked 19 October 1914, was killed in action Gallipoli Landing 25 April 1915. I am an Australian living in the US and bought them from Maggs Brothers London about 30 years ago. Please contact me.'

Bernadette Dawson

The Society has responded by telling Bernadette about our research into Charles Damen and what little is known about his life and death. We know that Charles was born in Plush in 1881 and came to live with his family in Cerne Abbas in Acreman Street. He enlisted into the Rifle Brigade in January 1900 and served for 8 years. He subsequently emigrated to Melbourne, Australia in about 1911. Charles enlisted into the Australian Imperial Force at the outbreak of WW1 and was killed on 25 April 1915 at Gallipoli following the landing of Australian and New Zealand forces there. This date is now commemorated as Anzac Day in both countries. We told Bernadette that we would be very pleased to see the medals.

In subsequent correspondence Bernadette told us that she had been born in Melbourne and later came to live in the USA. Having bought the medals from Maggs, Bernadette felt the need to protect and love these medals and the sacrifice and honour they represent. She tried to donate the medals to the War Memorial in Canberra, but they would have just entered the archives due to the number of campaign medals they already had and thus lost from sight. They are named campaign medals: 1914 Star, Inter-Allied Victory Medal, and the British War Medal. They are reported as being in beautiful condition, although the ribbons are faded and worn due to age. It is Bernadette's wish that the medals are donated to the Society. The Society has thanked her for her generosity in giving us this unique memory of one of our war casualties and has promised that they will be put on suitable public display. We will keep Magazine readers informed.



Letters



ANZAC Cove just after the landing



The Lone Pine cemetery at Gallipoli where Charles is buried



Gallipoli Campaign 1915

The Letters Page Editor will be pleased to hear from you on any subject that will increase a mutual understanding of our shared history.

gcmortimer@btinternet.com or put a note through the door at 3 Abbey Court, if you prefer.

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

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