

Redlynch & District Local History Society

Homes for Heroes (5000 years of history)

By Simon Cleggett

Our September talk was given by Simon Cleggett, the Army Basing Project Manager for Wessex Archaeology, who investigates the potential archaeology of British sites throughout the world.

20,000 troops will soon be leaving their barracks in Germany and many will be moving to Salisbury plain. A massive accommodation project is taking place at Tidworth, Bulford and Larkhill. The investigation of these sites has been an exciting project lasting 4 years involving all types of investigation. The presence of possible munitions and the exposed nature of the Plain to weather made the investigations additionally tough.

Tidworth revealed finds from the Bronze Age to Anglo Saxon era. A community cemetery of 45 graves dating from the conversion from paganism to Christianity period gave many rare grave goods including a relic box.

Bulford provided 60 Neolithic pits (4000BC) containing many artefacts some of no apparent utility e.g. chalk bowls. A previously unknown Neolithic henge of two interlocking circles was found, which had been reused for burials in the Bronze Age. An Anglo Saxon graveyard was discovered dating from 625-780 AD containing grave good from all over the known world including another relic box. *(see photo: Wessex Archaeology)*



At Larkhill the dig was so large that a quarter of a million metres of spoil were produced. A Neolithic causeway aligned to the solstice was in use 600 years before Stonehenge continuing in use up to the Beaker period. Several more undated henges were located and Beaker people pottery was found at the bottom of Neolithic post holes.

Larkhill also contained a vast World War 1 training area for the Western Front. Soldiers lived in the complex for months, digging miles of trenches, tunnels and dug outs. Finds were of a personal nature; laser and 3D scanning techniques were used to identify and avoid damaging the items. Some 380 cases of graffiti were recorded and the names researched. They came from all over the Commonwealth and 60% were found to have died before the end of the war.

At the end of the talk a minute's silence was held when we were asked to think of our ancestors from the Stone Age to the IWW. The large audience found it fascinating and entertaining due to the enthusiastic speaker. The sheer scale of the project is difficult to comprehend and will lead to many years of follow on research.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 2nd October at 7:30pm at Morgans Vale and Woodfalls Hall and comprises the AGM, followed by the talk "Augustus Pugin – his Architectural Origins in Salisbury" – by David Richards.