



IWERNE MINSTER NEWSLETTER

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2025

NEWS FROM THE ARCHEAOLOGICAL DIG IN IWERNE MINSTER

Context One Heritage & Archaeology are currently excavating part of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery that was probably associated with a lost minster that gave the village its name. The minster church has never been found but is thought to lie beneath the present parish church, which has 12th-century origins.

The site is off Church Path and covers the footprint (30m x 9m) of a forthcoming development of four houses. The excavation is a condition of granting planning permission and follows the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out in early 2025 that comprised two trial trenches. These were positioned over the proposed houses and associated car parking area. Taken together, the trenches produced evidence for six graves, all of which were sealed by medieval garden soils that included pottery dating from the 10th century—likely marking the point at which the cemetery finally went out of use. We know from documentary evidence that the minster may have been founded as early as the late 7th century AD, so the graveyard could have been in use for over 300 years. Documentary sources also suggest the minster was responsible for the religious well-being of five neighbouring ‘parishes’, including the burial of their dead. There is both recorded and anecdotal evidence of human remains being found locally, suggesting the cemetery was extensive.

At the time of writing (20th July), we have identified at least 40 graves, and more than 50% of these have been fully excavated. The results so far have been both predictable and surprising—but all very intriguing. The graves have largely survived well, owing to their depth (about 60cm below the current ground surface) and the fact that they were dug deeper still. The alkaline chalk bedrock has also helped preserve the bone. The graves follow Christian burial traditions: mainly west–east orientation (with the head to the west), no grave goods, and only a few stray finds such as animal bone and pottery. All the individuals were laid out straight, most with hands crossed over the pelvis and limbs close together, suggesting they were tightly wrapped in a shroud. There is no evidence for shroud pins, so it is assumed the wrapping was secured with twine or rope. A small number of burials have hands by the sides—possibly indicating a coffin burial, though no traces of coffins or nails

were found. One small child was buried the opposite way around, with the head at the eastern end; while this could mean several things, it may simply have been an error. Although the burials are mostly intact, some have been disturbed by rodent activity or tree roots, which have displaced or removed some bones.

The layout of the graves is interesting, as there appear to be distinct zones of burial activity. On the western side of the site, eight outlying graves all contain large adult males. The bones are notably robust, and each individual is estimated to have been nearly six feet tall. These graves are deeper than the others and set at slightly different angles. We don’t yet know why these men were separated, why it was only males, or why their graves were aligned differently. By contrast, an area in the southeast corner seems mostly set aside for children, while the eastern end contains four clear rows of graves with a mix of adult men and women, children and infants—suggesting a well-organised part of the cemetery. There is also clear evidence of reuse, with graves cutting into earlier ones in an area where space was clearly limited. In one example, a grave was carefully reopened to place a second individual directly above the first. We expect more of the same in the unexcavated graves here, and it’s possible that some graves were cleared completely, with the bones reburied in pits to make room for new interments. The concentration of graves eastwards supports the idea that the original church lay in this direction—most likely under the present church.

We were pleased to have hosted group visits from Claysmore School before the end of term, as well as the county Archaeologist and members of the Dorset planning team, as work has progressed. We will be conducting public site tours over one or two evenings before we finish.

We still have a few weeks left on site, and no doubt it will continue to surprise and intrigue us. Once excavation finishes, we will begin post-excavation work, which will take some time. This will include assessment and analysis of all the burials, radiocarbon dating to help place the cemetery in a timeline, and a study of what this tells us about life, death and belief during a pivotal period in Anglo-Saxon Wessex.

Richard McConnell

Context One Heritage & Archaeology

A PHOTOGRAPHIC DIARY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG



General view of the dig site looking towards St Mary's Church

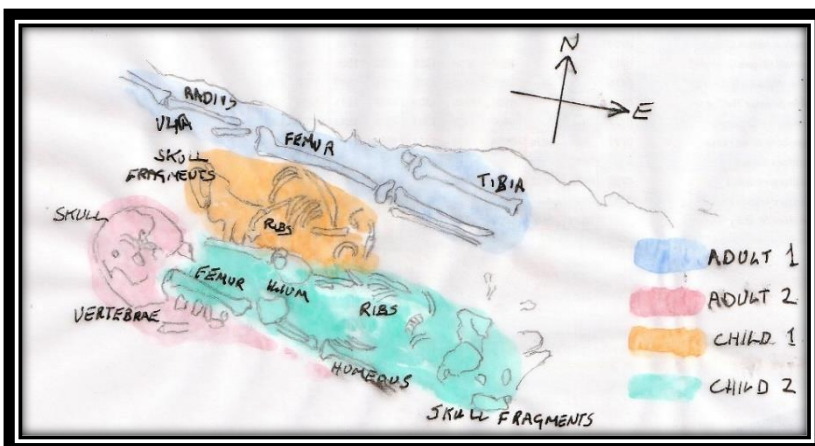


Male remains at the west end of the site. Note the long, robust femurs, heavy brow ridges and jaw.



The east end the site was densely reused, resulting in over-lapping burials and the disturbance of older burials. Retrieval and interpretation is a complex process.

The photograph shows the remains of at least four people, two adults and two children.



This diagram attempts to make some sense of things. Child 1 and adult 2 remains have been disturbed by the subsequent burials. It would appear that child 2 was buried some time later on top of adult 2, and, unusually, facing to the west rather than the east, as is customary in Christian burials. A puzzle.

John Goodliffe

NEWS FROM THE VILLAGE CLUB



Winners of the Boules Plate 2025: "The Odd Boules" from Clayesmore school, Nick, Oliver & Louis Church

On Saturday, 14th June the Club held its Annual "Boules" Tournament. This was a very successful event, enjoyed by both players and spectators. It was a beautiful if rather warm afternoon which began with a fun tournament for children, organised by Kerry and Heather. The adults continued rather more seriously. A bottle of champagne was raffled as play progressed. Thank you to Kerry and Paul for arranging the event.



Liz Westwell, Debbie and Clive Spedding, winners of the David Hicks Trophy 2025. Rosie the dog is a bit taken aback at Clive's enthusiasm...

On another warm evening in July the members enjoyed their Summer Party. This took the form of a Dutch Supper with drinks on the club. There was lots of delicious food and we enjoyed a really happy social evening. Coming up on 9th August is another popular Coffee Morning.

Do remember the clubroom is available for hire – regular Table Tennis, Pilates and Circuit Training happen every week and the Snooker Table

is also being used regularly. New members are always welcome.

Penny Marsh

KIDS' BOULES COMPETITION IN ACTION!



Boys' team: John, Theo, Jasper, Xavier.

Girls' team: Carla, Casey, Olivia, Linda

SECRETARY FOR ABINGDON HALL

THE ABINGDON HALL COMMITTEE ARE STILL IN NEED OF A SECRETARY. PLEASE CONTACT DIANNE BENFIELD ON 01747 811507 IF YOU ARE ABLE TO TAKE ON THIS POSITION.

IMPHA SUMMER OUTING TO ROSEMOOR



After a delayed start, because the coach was late, we arrived at RHS Rosemoor and were welcomed by a member of their staff. Maps were given out and coffee/lunch consumed. Then we commenced the garden journey - what an amazing place! There was so much to see. These are lovely gardens with lots of themed areas of magical planting, both formal and informal, with fruit and vegetable areas as well as a lake and woodland. We really couldn't cover it all, so I suspect there will be a few people making further visits. It is certainly worth a visit if you are ever in the area near Great Torrington.

Sue Le Prevost

OPEN GARDENS



Iwerne Minster Open Gardens event, which took place this year on June 28th and 29th, was a great success. Seventeen gardens were opened to the public and 324 visitors came over the two days. They were treated to some wonderful displays of flowers, vegetables and garden designs.

The feedback as people left for home was full of praise for the quality of the gardens, the friendliness of the residents and the beauty of the whole village.

As well as the 34 gardeners involved, there were also 38 villagers who helped with ploughman's lunches, afternoon teas, selling tickets and erecting carparking signs. The event made a total profit of £2475 to be split equally between the Abingdon Hall and the Village Club.

The Hall committee and the Club committee would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the weekend.

Dianne Benfield

HEDGES BESIDE PAVEMENTS AND FOOTPATHS

There are several pavements in the village where hedges obstruct the safe passage of pedestrians. On Dorset Council's website it clearly says that it is the responsibility of the *"owner or occupier of private land or property to ensure that frontage hedges, or other vegetation, do not overhang or protrude onto the highway or footpath and restrict passage of pedestrians or vehicles"*. See :- <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/hedgerows-and-high-hedges>

In practice, for pavements and footpaths, this means cutting hedges back and clearing debris from pavements to allow two people to pass, to allow an adult and a child to walk side by side, to allow the clear passage of a child's buggy or pushchair or of a mobility scooter. We're talking

about **at least a metre width or more**, preferably 1.5 metres.

Now that the bird nesting season is over, please can all those with hedges abutting a pavement or footpath to check that there is at least a metre clearance, and to cut back where there is not.

May I particularly ask those along the A350 to check and take appropriate action. Thank you!

Cllr John Goodliffe

OASIS PLANT CENTRE

It has been wonderful to welcome so many villagers to Oasis this summer and we like to think that everyone's gardens, large or small, are resplendent as a result. Needless to say, you are very welcome to peruse our plentiful stocks should you need to fill any gaps that may have appeared of late!

We have also been gratified by customers who have taken advantage of our reopening on Sundays and bank holidays for the summer months. However, we would just like to inform customers that we will in fact be closed on Sunday 10th August, due to a family bereavement, as well as bank holiday Monday (25th August). Needless to say, we hope this doesn't cause any inconvenience and look forward to seeing you at some other time.

Many thanks in the meantime.

Andrew Davies
Hambleton Plants
Oasis Plant Centre
01258 861325
07584 902751

BRYANSTON CHORAL SOCIETY

Our Choir offers friendly and professional musical direction and accompaniment.

No audition is required, just a love of singing.

We rehearse at Bryanston School's Music Department 7.30 – 9pm Tuesdays.

Please come to a **free Welcome session at 7.15pm on Tuesday, September 2nd, 2025.**

There is ample free parking in the Coade Hall car park.

We will be learning some lovely pieces by Sullivan, Holst and Gibbons with carols for our concert on December 13th, 2025. Please look on our website for details: www.bryanstonchoralsociety.co.uk

*The subscription for this term is £55 or £90 for two terms Autumn and Spring (to include Music Scores)
Free for under 30s*

WALK FOR WARDS



On July 6th, Alicia Friend and her mother, Stevie, who lives in Iwerne Minster, joined over 2,100 walkers at Wilton House to raise money for the Salisbury Hospital Walk for Wards appeal. The walkers ranged in age from the elderly, some with walking aids, to the very young being pushed by their families in push chairs. After a warm up and a welcome from the organisers, everyone set off on their chosen distance of three, five, or ten kilometres. As each group returned they were clapped to recognise their achievement and contribution to the appeal.

The 10 kilometre walk which Alicia had chosen to do was a very significant milestone for both Alicia and Stevie. Just over two years ago, following a serious accident, Alicia was told that she might never walk properly again. With the support of her mum and the physiotherapists at Salisbury Hospital Wessex Rehabilitation Centre, Alicia was nursed back to health. The physios doubtless recognised Alicia's determination but it was their expertise and warmth which made all the difference. During the intensive stage of the treatment, Alicia was able to spend two nights a week in accommodation funded by the Stars Appeal so that Stevie didn't have to make the 50 mile round trip daily and it is just this sort of help that the Walk for Wards appeal is raising money for – those things that make so much difference to families when times are very tough.

Alicia and Stevie have so far raised £1,215 for the Wessex Rehabilitation Centre. Overall, the Walk for Wards has reached £115,000; the 2025 goal is £2 million so there's a fair way to go. To find out more about the appeal and to donate, go to: <https://starsappeal.org/news/2000-walkers-join-us-to-celebrate-20th-walk-for-wards/>

IWERNE VALLEY WALKING GROUP SUMMER SOLSTICE WALK 21/6/25

We, a group of 6, set off from The Cricketers in Shroton at 18:00hrs. In sunshine and a bit of a breeze, we went south along footpath E11/10 before turning west up the steep though not too long climb of footpath E40/31 to the old Dutch barn at the top then curving NW towards Hambledon Hill.

Part way along, at the urging of one of the walkers, we took a diversion to admire the dense old yew wood on the south west of the Hambledon Hill complex. It is very dark and uninviting! Although this is thought to be ancient, it is not identified as such by Natural England.

Returning to the path, we walked through the Mesolithic site, where there is not much to see but humps and hollows, past the trig point and into the monumental earthworks of the Neolithic / Iron Age site. It is vast and awesome especially when one considers the man hours needed for its construction. It has significance. It may have been a gathering place for the three Iron Age tribes whose territories met there.

We spotted many common pyramidal orchids along the way, and other walkers and picknickers gathering, like us, to enjoy the view on this wonderfully balmy evening.

Nearly at the north west end, we made camp, stretched out, looking over Child Okeford to Sturminster Newton and the Blackmore Vale, and enjoyed our picnic.



We did not linger until sunset, at 21:30hrs – an hour and a half in the increased chill (a fair breeze had arisen up there) but returned, descending down from the trig point to Shroton.

JG

Next walk will be in September. See Iwerne Minster Diary for more details. Or contact Helen English 01747 853472.

THE VIEW FROM ST MARY'S



The most important recent event in the life of St Mary's took place, not in Iwerne, but at Salisbury Cathedral when our curate, David Sinclair, was ordained as a priest, along with ten others from around the Diocese. Previously David has acted as deacon, but can now, in particular, lead services as a priest and give Holy Communion.

It was a wonderful occasion, led by the Bishop of Salisbury, Stephen Lake. The cathedral was packed with supporters of those being ordained – family and friends and, in David's case, representatives of the five parishes in the Diocese and the clergy who serve in them. It was a privilege to support David on this great day.

We are very fortunate that David will now continue as our curate for the next two to three years. On the day after his ordination, David John led a Benefice service in a packed St Mary's at which David Sinclair presided over his first communion. All those present were delighted to welcome the latter in his new role as priest.

And now to something more mundane – the churchyard. We know how important this lovely open space in the middle of the village is to many people for various reasons. Many of course have relatives buried in the churchyard; others simply love its natural beauty. We try to keep it well maintained so that it continues to give pleasure to residents and visitors alike. The grass is cut regularly, but more maintenance is needed. Perhaps most urgently the yew trees need to be protected from the ivy, which sucks the moisture from the trees and makes them brittle.

Before lockdown, a small group of people, some churchgoers, others not, met once a month to clear ivy and carry out other jobs around the churchyard, but this group has not met for some time and action is needed!

If you would like to join a monthly working party (coffee and flapjacks included!), to help with maintenance of the churchyard please do contact me: or 01747 812603 or

David.parkhouse83@gmail.com. You don't have to be a churchgoer, just someone who loves the church buildings and their surrounds. We would love you to join us.

David Parkhouse

HOT! DOGS! (& CAKE)!!



Well, that just about sums up the Sutton Waldron and Iwerne Minster (SWIM) WI's cream tea held on Wednesday 16 July.

Whilst the temperature soared, both members and non-members enjoyed a fabulous cream tea put on by the local WI Branch.

So – yes hot and yes cakes - but DOGS? Actually yes – we were thoroughly entertained by Tina Hazzard and her team from Dogwise in Mere.



Two beautiful golden retrievers (Shady and Pippi) braved the heat and gave us a marvellous demonstration of their retrieval, agility and dancing skills aided by lots of cuddles and treats.


Did you know that dogs can scent 100 times better than us pathetic humans? Also, that dogs can't see the colour red. Well – we were assured that this was so.

We were encouraged to keep our own dogs entertained by training them to search for the TV remote, phone and glasses cases. (Good luck with that!)

Finally, we were shown how to check if our doggy friends might be in pain before it comes too obvious – this included them balancing on "wobble boards" to see how their stability was – you had to be there – honestly!

So good – so hot!

Pam Jelley



IWERNE MINSTER PRODUCE & HORTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

Summer Show Sunday 17 August

CAN YOU HELP? We want as many people as possible to enjoy our 2025 summer show. We can't succeed without volunteers to set the show up, help on the day and clear away afterwards. We need:

- Helpers on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th to put up gazebos, cover tables, organise stalls etc.
- Volunteers to run stalls or sit in a Marquee for 45-60 minutes on Sunday 17th. We need helpers for the bouncy castle and children's games.
- Helpers at the end of the show to tidy up and put tables etc. away.
- Helpers on Monday 18th to take down gazebos and finish clearing away.

If you can help, please contact Mervyn [811339] or Anne [07825 862037]

We are also asking for donations towards the grand raffle, tombola and also books:

- We would welcome donations of Wine, Beer, Cordials, Tea, Coffee, Luxury Savouries, Preserves, Chutneys, Biscuits and Chocolates etc. for the grand raffle. Please drop off at The Hollow, Tower Hill

Contact Sue Le Prevost - 812173

- We would like donations of items for the tombola. Unwanted, unused gifts or new items are welcome. We need items for adults and children. Please drop off at Patch Cottage, Tower Hill

Contact Marion Harrison - 812259

- Do you have any good books in tip top condition that people would find interesting? Please bring them to the village club from Friday 15th August.

Thank you for your help

Your waste, your responsibilities.

As a householder, rubbish you've handed to someone else is still your legal responsibility until it is correctly disposed of. If someone - such as an unlicensed 'man in a van' found online - were to fly-tip that waste, you could end up paying a fine or being taken to court.

Make sure you are covered when handing over your waste: -

- Suspect all waste carriers until they have provided their licence
- Check their licence details on the public register for waste carriers
- Refuse unexpected offers to take your waste away
- Ask how your rubbish will be disposed of
- Paperwork – get an invoice or receipt for the waste they're taking, including their contact details

If a builder, tradesman, gardener etc. transports waste on your behalf, such as debris left over from a job they've done for you - they also need to be registered as a Waste Carrier and dispose of any materials in a responsible manner.

You can check a Waste Carrier Licence [here](#) or scan the QR code.

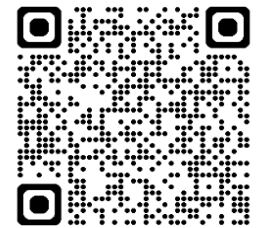


LET'S SCRAP FLY TIPPING!

Around two thirds of fly tips are household waste. These are examples of **FLY TIPPING** which **YOU** could be fined or prosecuted for.

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/scrap

Logos: Dorset Council, CL-A, Environment Agency, Dorset Police, Dorset Council



For details on Dorset Council's SCRAP campaign or to report a fly tip to us, click [here](#) or scan the QR code above.



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