

**August 2021**



## ***Revealing Roman Westbury – a progress report***

**I**T'S BEEN KNOWN for a long time that people lived in what is now Westbury parish during the Roman period; finds of pottery and coins show this; but it's only in the last twenty years or so that Westbury's archaeologists have begun to unravel where and how.



Fieldwalking and geophysical surveys led by Barry Lane supported the theory that there were a number of small farmsteads spaced roughly one mile apart along the lower part of the parish. There may also have been a building in Back Lane and a farm at Deer Leap.

The farmsteads were probably family-owned and run, perhaps helped by local workers and slaves. The owners are very unlikely to have been Roman, but almost certainly locals who

adopted many elements of the Roman way of life.

One site by a stream south of the A371 produced Roman-period building materials, and geophysics suggested a possible bath house. Barry now knew that there had to be a substantial Romano-British dwelling somewhere nearby, but resistivity and magnetometry

surveys of the surrounding fields showed nothing.

*Cont'd on page 2*

**The next issue of the  
Newsletter will be published  
in October.**

In 2016 a group of detectorists asked a local farmer for permission to search his fields. About 500 metres from the possible bath house they found a coin hoard and many other coins and metal items, plus a 20kg lead 'pig' dated 164-169AD, which can now be seen in Wells & Mendip Museum.

Subsequent excavations in the immediate area provided evidence of small-scale metal-working in both lead and iron, probably to serve the needs of a farmstead. There was no sign of any buildings, but this is presumably because a workshop would have been a simple wooden structure, not stone-built. There was also no trace of a dwelling nearby.



*Lead pig from Westbury*

In 2019, excavation of the bath house site produced no building, just underground rock, but did reveal an almost complete human skeleton, subsequently carbon dated to around 500AD. This was a male aged around 45 at the time of death, whose spine showed evidence of hard manual labour. He had been wrapped in a shroud then buried in a shallow grave.

The hunt for Barry's 'villa' continued with geophysics over an ever-increasing area. Then, in the dry early summer of 2020, a local farmer spotted rectangular scorch marks in one of his fields. Subsequent drone photos and detailed geophysics showed a rectangular building measuring around 36m x 13m, about 170m from where the lead pig was found.

Excavation under COVID regulations was often challenging, but the size of the site allowed trenches to be 'socially distanced'. The first task was to find the external corners of the building, followed by the main outer and internal walls.

The next will be excavating some of the rooms inside the building.

The evidence so far suggests a substantial farmhouse rather than an upmarket villa with mosaic floors. The wealth to build this most likely came from selling farm produce to the garrison and miners at Charterhouse and in the local markets at Shepton Mallet and Rackley. Coins dated from 260AD to 360AD give an approximate timeframe for the construction and occupation of the building. Stone foundations most likely supported cob walls, and the roof was covered, at least partially, with sandstone slates from an outcrop above Lynchcombe.

Other finds include a millstone, fragments of Roman-period glass, roof and building nails, hobnails and a substantial number

of pottery shards. The majority of the pots were made somewhere nearby, with about a quarter coming from the Poole area, and a very small number from France.



*Constantine 1 coin minted in Arles, France 330-335AD*

As is usual in archaeology, there are still plenty of questions to be answered. Was the farmhouse all built at the same time, or in different phases? What was each of the rooms used for? Is there a bath house? Where exactly was the local pottery made? How was the millstone powered – by water? Donkey? Slaves? Was the building occupied after 380AD? The list goes on . . .

The Westbury Society Archaeology Group will continue excavating the site into 2022 and beyond, including a week-long dig in August involving community archaeologists from other local groups. In early September there will be an open afternoon for local residents to visit and hear about what has been found so far.

**Andrew Buchanan**



# ***News from the Nursery***

***The tree nursery has now been cleared and significant numbers of trees are planted and growing there. Thanks to the efforts of all the hardworking volunteers.***



*Sally Bailey's new bed*



*Buckthorn seedlings*



*The view from the nursery*



# The Westbury Sub Mendip Scarecrow Competition

## Prizes to be Won!!!

Design a scarecrow with a "Traffic Calming" theme to help motorists drive carefully through our village

Scarecrows to be assembled at Court House Farm no later than Monday 31st August where judging will take place

Scarecrows will then be positioned to encourage motorists to drive more carefully through the village

Entry forms and competition rules available from the village shop and website (<https://westburysubmendip-pc.gov.uk>)



# Dark Skies

*Several residents have enquired what the Westbury dark skies policy says.*

*Here it is.*

**A**LL PROPOSED developments should have regard to Westbury-sub-Mendip current policies for dark skies, and proposals should avoid light pollution and protect the night-time environment of intrinsically dark areas of the village and countryside. Minimum lighting levels, controlled by sensors and timers, should be used where lighting is required.

The requirement for any external lighting should be restricted to areas of specific concern and may include: Road safety in areas where there is a very specific risk to pedestrians and cyclists; deterring criminal activity; lighting entrances to building used after dark; lighting for evening sporting or recreational activities; supporting the night-time economy including lighting for farmers needing to work at night.

Innovative green solutions for appropriate lighting will be encouraged. Residential development should be designed to minimise light pollution, avoiding the use of unscreened roof-lights or atria. General street lighting is discouraged in all areas.

This policy encourages proposals that conserve and enhance the distinctive rural character of the area. It seeks to prevent light pollution and protect the night-time views of the rural

area, heritage assets, and intrinsically dark areas.

The policy recognises that artificial light offers valuable benefits to residents: safety, finding one's way around, preventing crime, facilitating sport and the night-time economy. However, inappropriate artificial lighting can contribute to a range of problems: it gives the village urban feel, it detracts from the enjoyment of the night sky, it can cause health problems and can also impact the normal behaviour of wildlife. Always on lighting does nothing to discourage crime and lights controlled by sensors are much more appropriate for this purpose.

Light pollution is primarily about light escaping from premises and street lighting. Artificial light escaping from premises can be prejudicial to human health and a statutory nuisance, as recognised in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, and this policy support the basic purpose of the Act and provides guidance about factors in development proposals which could lead to light pollution from premises.

Westbury-sub-Mendip residents have been consulted on several occasions about the removal of street lighting, and the majority have been in support. The general view is that street lighting is more appropriate to more urban and suburban communities, whereas



*A pollarded ash in Cook's Field  
Photo by Tina Westcott*



Westbury-sub-Mendip is a rural community where the rules appropriate to the countryside should take priority. This policy therefore requires that new developments should avoid street lighting.

In all proposed developments, factors that will be taken into account when deciding the appropriateness of artificial lighting include: the location, the hours of operation, the quantity of lights proposed, brightness and control, and direction of the beam. Artificial lighting schemes that are likely to be approved will include good designs that:

- Seek innovative green solutions for low-level lighting.
- Reflect the type of area where they will be in operation
- Minimise brightness and do not over illuminate an area,
- Minimise hours of operation and have automatic PIR sensors and timed cut-off,
- Use light fittings that control the direction of the beam, which should not emit light at angles greater than 70 degrees and avoid any upward light emission.

The majority of Westbury Sub Mendip Parish benefits from truly dark skies and consequently thriving populations of nocturnal wildlife. Where this is threatened by encroaching development residents the Parish Council will make strenuous efforts to contain the light pollution.

Paragraph 125 of the NPPF encourages good design, planning policies and decisions to limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light.

The National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 23, paragraph 2.18 states that when preparing policies account should be taken of 'the effects on health, the natural environment, or general amenity, resulting from the release of light'.

## Westbury Village Hall



**is available for hire!**

**To request a booking and for information about Covid safeguards, contact Peter Bright on 870640.**

**For the latest Covid information and guidance following the ending of most restrictions on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021, [click here](#).**

# *And then there was one*

***As you may be aware, Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick MP has announced he has decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, a proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the existing administrative county of Somerset.***

**THIS DECISION MEANS** that a single unitary council for Somerset will be formed on 1 April 2023 to replace the county's five existing county and district councils.

The decision follows a government-run consultation from 22 February to 19 April, with a reported 5,500 responses. A local poll was commissioned by the district councils as they felt the voice of the residents was missing. It took place from 18 May to 4 June and saw more than 111,000 people voting, with 65 per cent preferring the Stronger Somerset proposal.

I remain aligned with my fellow District Council Leaders in Somerset that the decision the Secretary of State has taken is riding roughshod over the people of Somerset who voted so overwhelmingly in favour of the Stronger Somerset plan.

That vote was the third time in recent history that the people of Somerset have decisively rejected a proposal for a single unitary – following the referendum in 2007 and the Ipsos MORI survey in 2020.

By ignoring the will of the people, the Secretary of State is breaking the bond of trust between elected representatives and those they represent. We believe there is still chance for Parliament to see sense.

We have a real opportunity to address the real challenges our county faces such as how to reduce demand on expensive crisis services, to break the cycle of inequality and under-achievement, and to invest in local solutions to local issues. There is a high degree of public

support for our business case and some MPs who supported the single unitary case are also clear that they see merit in many of the ideas of the Stronger Somerset case. As such, we need to ensure that these views are acknowledged and ideas integrated into whatever new system of Local Government is introduced.

Similarly, I understand the Government has an ambitious timeline for the creation of this new authority but that does not mean we need to rush, and now is certainly not the time for politic point scoring.

Indeed, this has never been about politics as the cross-party support for Stronger Somerset demonstrated. It has always been about delivering the best possible services and future for Somerset, and we all need to remember that.

Please be reassured that the great work already being undertaken by Mendip District Council, such as development of cycle paths, will continue through whatever transition period is put in place. Similarly, alongside my Chief Executive and senior officers, I will be doing all I can to provide our team and our partners with all the reassurance and information they need to be able to continue to provide our wide range of essential services, projects and initiatives to benefit our city, towns and parishes.

Right now, we need to take a little time and work together to create the best possible outcome for Somerset, and that is what I and my fellow District Leaders will work to achieve.

**Ros Wyke**

# ROBERT GLANVILE PLAYING FIELD TRUST

## 100 CLUB

Support your local playing field and you could  
win a monthly cash prize!!

### HOW TO ENTER

£12 PER YEAR (£1 PER MONTH)

**VIA VILLAGE SHOP:** In an envelope with your name and contact details and 100 club on, place cash or a cheque for £12 payable to Robert Glanvile Playing Field Trust

**BY BACS:** payment to Robert Glanvile Playing Field Trust. Put your name as reference, then email Jan at owlshaunt@btinternet.com with your contact details

CAF bank Sort code: 405240 Account: 00015438

### HOW YOUR MONEY HELPS

The Robert Glanvile Playing Field Trust is a charity and is run by a group of volunteers. By entering the 100 Club your money is used to help maintain the facilities and make the playing field safe and fun to use.

We are very fortunate to have such a fantastic facility for our village and we hope that you love using the playing field. Thank you for supporting the RGPT.

A 1<sup>ST</sup> (£20) AND 2<sup>ND</sup> (£10) PRIZE ARE DRAWN EACH MONTH AND WINNERS WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE PEW AND CONTACTED BY JAN. GOOD LUCK!!!



# ***Bus Back Better***



**SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL** is consulting on the future of bus services within the county and beyond. The deadline for submissions is very tight – 15 August.

Villagers are encouraged to give their own feedback, but you may also let the chair and/or clerk (contact details on the next page) know your thoughts and opinions so that we can reflect them in a parish council response. To access the feedback form, [click here](#).

You can learn more about the plans from the Somerset Bus Partnership website, for which [click here](#).

And set out below is a brief statement of intent. Let's hold them to it.

**Sue Isherwood**

## **Somerset's Bus Policy**

*The National Bus Strategy (Bus Back Better) offers an opportunity to improve Somerset's bus service, both its network and its infrastructure, thereby making buses a more attractive alternative to going by car. Somerset CC has currently the fourth lowest levels of bus usage per head of population and therefore ought to be identified as a priority for investment through the National Bus Strategy. An enhanced bus partnership is how the Government's climate emergency and levelling-up agendas can deliver major benefits in Somerset.*

*Somerset County Council is the Local Transport Authority in Somerset but feeds into the South West Transport Board and Western Gateway Transport Board for regional co-ordination.*

*Somerset County Council has agreed to be carbon neutral by 2030. Achieving modal shift from cars to public transport is essential if carbon reduction targets are to be met.*

*The council believes that the needs and concerns of communities and passengers are at the heart of transport planning.*

## ***Staying in touch***

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## ***On the beat***



Our local police want to support local communities and are intending to hold three police beat surgeries in the village over the next few months.

The dates are Thursday 5 August 5-6 pm, Wednesday 1 September 11.30-12.30 and Friday 8 October 6-7pm.

The venue has yet to be decided – but it will most likely be The Square. Where else would you like them to station themselves so that they can hear any of your concerns about neighbourhood policing and you can receive crime prevention advice? Please let me know.

Watch out for posters on the village notice boards and the village website.

**Sue Isherwood**