



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2020

Letter from the Editor

Hello! The archaeology at home is going great guns; Chris and David Holland have got stuck in and opened a test pit in their garden, that's dedication for you.



A few things found already.

As I mentioned last month there is nothing in my garden (so far) but I did find this 'thing' while walking my dogs in Epping Forest heading up a path in the vicinity of Loughton Camp, 'thing' is what I call the flints I pick up, I still hand Lee a flint and say "is it a thing" though I'm getting much better at identifying whether it's a 'thing' or not (you know when you've got a good one) so I knew I had a "thing" and Lee has confirmed it's a nice little scraper.



I walk the dogs with my head down scanning the ground, I often get home with a crick in my neck and things in my pockets, old bottles, flints and heart shaped stones.

However, my parent's garden is a different story and walking up a short path in the veg patch made out of debris from around the garden I collected this in about 3 minutes.



Articles

This month we are pleased to include an article on '**The Bronze Age Collapse**' by Rosalind Connor's son, Alex, who is an enthusiastic WEAG member.

Don't forget if you have an article up your sleeve, a short piece or photos of a visit to an archaeological site or even something for our '**Archaeology at Home**' section please do get in touch via lexie.lyons@icloud.com.

Competition

Who can name this mystery object?



Profile on a WEAG Member

Would you like to be 'our profile on a member'? If so email me on lexie.lyons@icloud.com and I'll forward you the questions.

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Anything you'd like to contribute to the WEAG Newsletter or if you have any comments on the new format, please email lexie.lyons@icloud.com

THE BRONZE AGE COLLAPSE

submitted by Alex Connor

"The story of the human race is war. Except for brief and precarious interludes, there has never been peace in the world; and before history began, murderous strife was universal."- Winston Churchill

Two years following this quote, it would be proved true, when the precarious interwar peace fell into a war larger than any other in history. Following this war, the global community attempted to change this state of affairs, establishing groups to temper international aggression. Although the establishment of a peaceful world order had been attempted many times before, the concert created in the aftermath of WW2 has been the most successful. In fact, the period following 1945 is often referred to as the 'Long Peace'.

The parts of the world that have bucked this trend are those that have engaged in a policy of mercantile protectionism. The theory is based on the fact that wars have historically been started in order to gain resources. Because resource production is typically less productive when the workforce is engaging in combat, for nations that have fewer trade barriers it is cheaper to purchase those goods than to go to war for them. However, despite what proponents of the long peace might assert this is not unprecedented.

Three thousand years before the WTO, when the extent of civilisation was confined to an enclave in the eastern Mediterranean, human society followed this very structure. Wars certainly didn't disappear during this period, but these wars were limited in scope. The few conflicts that occurred during this period were ones either involving belligerents outside this system, such as unproductive tribes, or were fought over proxy states along trade routes, such as in the Amurru kingdom.

During the Late Bronze Age, economies became prosperous, due to ease of trade and specialisation. Greece made wine and luxury goods, the Cypriots mined copper, the Hittites refined tin, and in the cities of these empires, labourers worked these materials into manufactured goods. However, all of these specialised economies revolved around Egypt, the cradle of civilisation and the world's great supplier of food. Across the Middle East, there are boundless archaeological sites dating from this period. Although most popular knowledge centres around Ancient Egypt, mainly through the monuments of Giza, the Bronze Age world extended north through the Hittites in Turkey, to the Mycenaeans in Greece, and east to Pakistan. In these sites, we can sometimes find signs of great advancement, such as sky disks and calendars. Invariably, the one thing that can almost always be found in Bronze Age sites is a layer of black soot.

In 1177 BC, the first generation of civilisation ended. The few civilisations that survived would collapse into war and barbarism within a few decades of the collapse.

Throughout most of period of archaeological study, it has been assumed that this was a result of a single group, known as the Sea Peoples. It was believed that Bronze Age society ended when this group of militant nomads attacked the eastern Mediterranean world. However, as time has progressed, this has become a far less accepted theory; because the location of some sites destroyed during this period do not intersect with the direction it is believed the Sea Peoples took. Although they were an important trigger, it is clear that the Sea Peoples were not the only cause of the collapse of the first generation of civilisation.

Currently the most popular theory is based on the theory of system collapse. Due to the fact that each country relied on one another for whole sections of their economy, it only required a few regions to halt production for the entirety of society to fall with it. Through this interpretation, the trigger of the collapse is irrelevant, because the reason for the collapse was the system itself, rather than the Sea Peoples. It is asserted that following the initial fall in production, scarcity caused internal unrest in the civilisations of the Bronze Age, which in turn caused production to decrease further, and this cycle continued.

Through the global trade system brought about in the Late Bronze Age, living standards for most of the population rose. However, the inter-reliance required all kingdoms to be stable. The Bronze Age Collapse teaches us how vulnerable our civilisation could be.

WEAG CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Lecture Program

Lectures are in the committee room at Woodford County High School, High Road, Woodford Green, IG8 9LA at 7:15pm unless otherwise stated.

Non-members are welcome to attend Lectures. A voluntary contribution of £2 would be appreciated from guests.

Monday 14 September 2020 @ 19:15

The Rudge Lecture
'Highams in Walthamstow'. *Speaker: Georgina Green.*

Monday 12 October 2020 @ 19:15

'Medieval Church Wall Paintings in Essex'. *Speakers: Lee Joyce & Claire Hooper.*

Monday 11 November 2020 @ 19:15

'Bricks in Essex'. *Speaker: Anne Padfield.* Anne is a local historian and English Heritage guide at Hill Hall.

Monday 7 December 2020 @ 19:15

Social (book sales and refreshments) and roundup of member activities.

Monday 11 January 2021 @ 19:15

'Non-Invasive Archaeology'. *Speaker: Melinda Barham.*

Monday 8 February 2021 @ 19:15

Details to be confirmed

Monday 8 March 2021 @ 19:15

AGM and 'Progress in the last 12 months at Bankside Rose'.
Speaker: Harvey Sheldon, Birkbeck College, WEAG President.

Monday 12 April 2021 @ 19:15

'Historic Cultural Landscapes in South West Essex'.
Speaker: Tricia Moxey.

Monday 10 May 2021 @ 19:15

The Rudge Lecture – 'to be announced'.
Speaker: Mike "Mr Stonehenge" Parker Pearson.