

# Jot & Tittle

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**BALH**  
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*A personal selection of Salisbury, Wessex,  
British and world, history*

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## CREDIT WHERE IT'S DEW

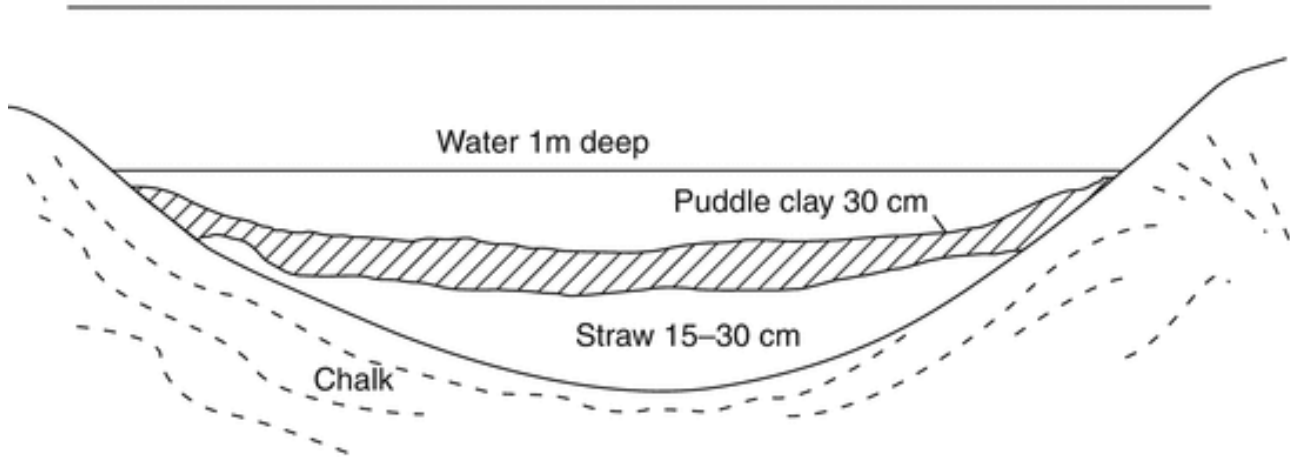
**M**ary Delorme's book *Curious Wiltshire* (Ex Libris Press 1990) is a mine of interesting information. One chapter is devoted to dew ponds. I am sure that you have all seen these features of the high chalk down-lands. What I hadn't appreciated was how complex they were and what an art there was in their construction. The photo below was taken near Arundel.



The Marquess of Ailesbury included in his leases elaborate and expensive conditions where dew pond construction was concerned: *Three layers of straw, each three inches in thickness when pressed down, are placed alternately between three layers of puddled clay, the whole series giving a thickness of 2'6", no other substance being required. The best wheat-straw is used, not cut in any way. The lowest layer is straw, the topmost clay. The ponds are then railed round in order to prevent cattle straying into them....each pond costs about £300; they are of large size, being about 60' across. The pond so made lasts roughly about one hundred years.*

The straw was used for insulation but also as a protective covering to stop the clay drying out. The puddled clay was for waterproofing and chalk often added to prevent worms. Chalk rubble

15–30m dia.



could be used on top to discourage animals and lime too was sometimes mixed with the clay. To make *puddle*, clay is chopped with a spade, water added and the mixture formed into a lining and compressed by treading down.

Wiltshire had its own professional dew pond makers, one example being the Cruse family of Imber. The work began annually on 12<sup>th</sup> September and they toured the countryside four six or seven months, weather permitting. *They would be recommended to lodgings, and return to them year after year, for in those days the men of Imber were cleanly in person and character, upright, trusty and trustful, and they paid ready money for their simple needs. For their lodgings they paid 2/6 for five nights, for sleeping accommodation and their cooking. They provided their own food, and returned home for Saturday and Sunday.*

The Cruses took their own tools and the farmer provided carts and materials, and paid about £40, out of which the senior Mr Cruse paid wages and any tool repairs. They sometimes travelled as far away as Kent, Berkshire and Somerset. Bear in mind that the pond was excavated to around 8' so the farmer had to cart away a lot of waste as well as providing seventy cartloads of clay and of course lime and straw. It was heavy work with the clay pounded until it was glossy and the angle of the sides had to be right for the sheep to drink. If sheep were fed on hay they became very thirsty and could drink as much as two gallons.

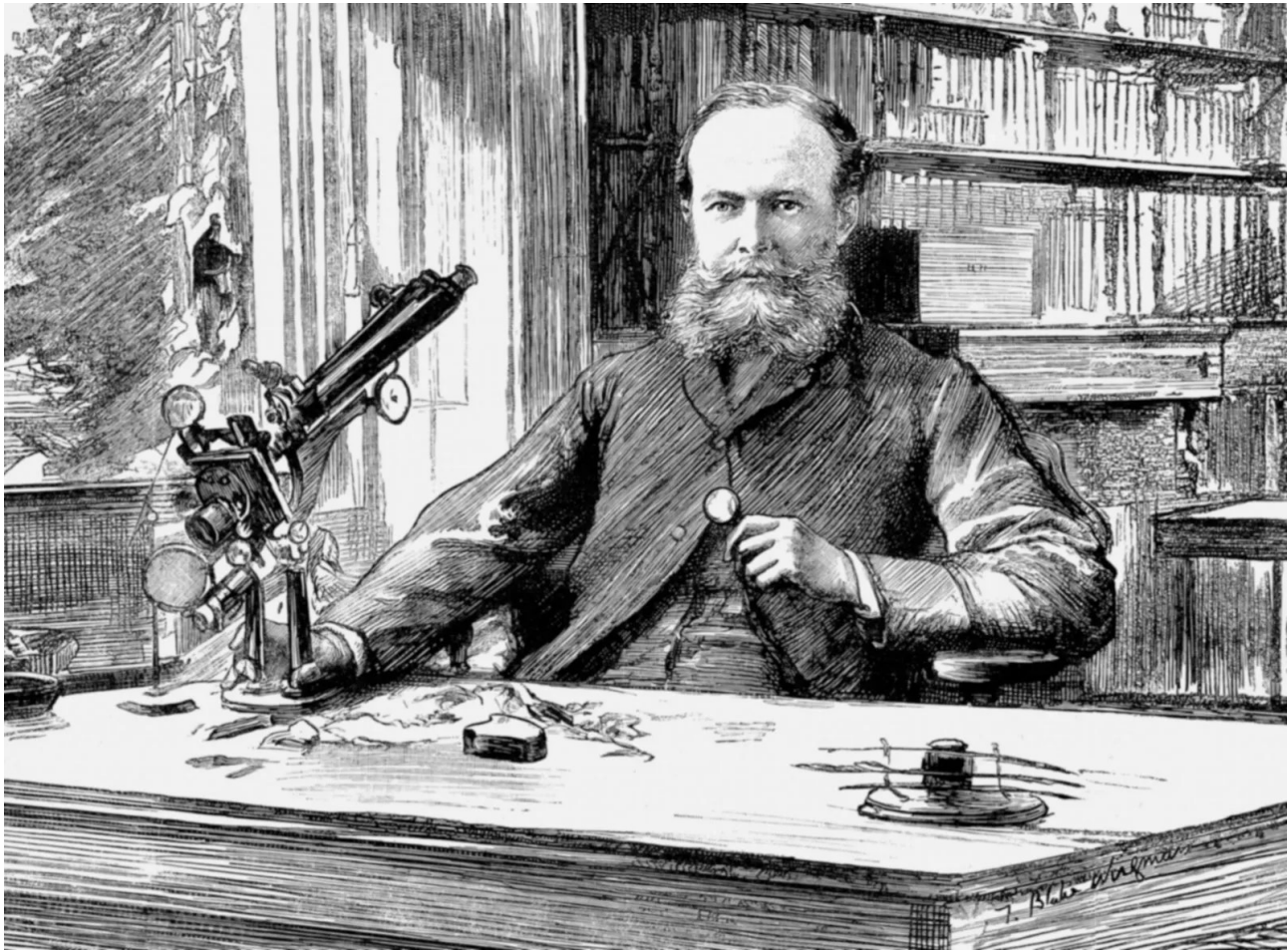
The end came with the introduction of pumps and piped water but many examples of nineteenth century dew ponds can still be found on the high chalk in Wiltshire.

### BANK HOLIDAYS

**T**he first official bank holidays were named in the Bank Holidays Act 1871, introduced by Liberal politician and banker Sir John Lubbock. Under the Act, "no person was compelled to make any payment or to do any act upon a bank holiday which he would not be compelled to do or make on Christmas Day or Good Friday, and the making of a payment or the doing of an act on the following day was equivalent to doing it on the holiday". People were so grateful that some called the first bank holidays *St Lubbock's Days* for a while.



John Lubbock, 1st Baron Avebury, 4th Baronet, PC, DL, FRS, FRAI (1834 – 1913), known as Sir John Lubbock, 4th Baronet from 1865 until 1900, was an English banker, Liberal politician, philanthropist, scientist and polymath. Lubbock worked in his family



company as a banker but made significant contributions in archaeology, ethnography, and several branches of biology. He coined the terms "Paleolithic" and "Neolithic" to denote the Old and New Stone Ages, respectively. He helped establish archaeology as a scientific discipline, and was influential in debates concerning evolutionary theory. He introduced the first law for the protection of the UK's archaeological and architectural heritage. He was also a founding member of the *X Club*.

#### THE X CLUB

**T**he *X Club* was a dining club of ten men who supported the theories of natural selection and academic liberalism in late 19th-century England. Thomas Henry Huxley was the initiator; he called the first meeting for 3 November 1864. The club met in London once a month—except in July, August and September—from November 1864 until March 1893, and its members are believed to have wielded much influence over scientific thought. The members of the club were George Busk, Edward Frankland, Thomas Archer Hirst, Joseph Dalton Hooker, Thomas Henry Huxley, Francis Galton, John Lubbock, Herbert Spencer, William Spottiswoode, and John Tyndall, united by a "devotion to science, pure and free, untrammelled by religious dogmas."

The men who would compose the *X Club* already knew each other well. By the 1860s, friendships had turned the group into a social network, and the men often dined and went on holidays together. After Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859, the men began working together to aid the cause for naturalism and natural history. They backed



the liberal Anglican movement that emerged in the early 1860s, and both privately and publicly supported the leaders of the movement. ED: Liberal Anglo-Catholics allowed modern knowledge and research to inform their use of reason. Science and religion, for instance, are held to be legitimate and different methodologies of revealing God's truth.

According to its members, the club was originally started to keep friends from drifting apart, and to partake in scientific discussion free from theological influence. A key aim was to reform the Royal Society, with a view to making the practice of science professional. In the 1870s and 1880s, the members of the group became prominent in the scientific community and some accused the club of having too much power in shaping the scientific landscape of London. The club was terminated in 1893, after depletion by death, and as old age made regular meetings of the surviving members impossible.

Thanks to Wikipedia for the above.

### THE CRÈME DE LA CREM.

Justin Pollards *The Interesting Bits - The history you might have missed* (John Murray 2007) is what you would expect from one of the QI writers, factual but funny. Here are a couple of examples:

One of the stories carries the title *Who Cremated Jesus Christ?* It concerns a highly eccentric Welshman, Dr William Price (right), who claimed to be the reincarnation of a 10,000 year old Druid. He named his poor son *Iesu Grist* (Jesus Christ), who unfortunately died young in 1884. Dr Price refused to register the death and prepared a large funeral pyre with the boy on top. Bear in mind that cremation was not known at this point, so the subsequent riot was perhaps to be expected. At the following court hearing William walked free as he had not actually broken any law. At his own death in 1893 he was of course cremated and more than 20,000 turned out to watch. The result was the first official cremation in 1885 followed by the Cremation Act of 1902.



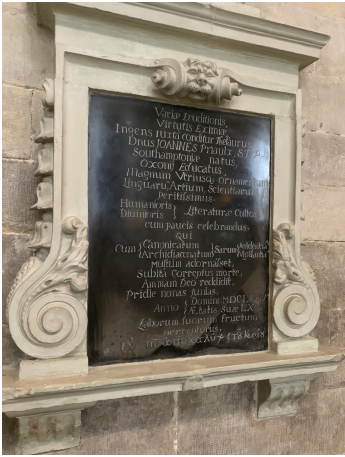
### THE SHOCK OF THE NEW

Jean-Antoine Nollet was not only an Abbé but a scientist whose work on electricity (coupled with showmanship) rivalled Benjamin Franklin. At Versailles in 1746 he lined up 180 royal guards and connected them with a thin wire that was attached to Leyden jars (an early form of capacitor). The electricity produced made the soldiers jump in the air which greatly amused the king.

Later, in Paris, he persuaded some 200 monks from the Carthusian Grand Convent to repeat the experiment. Sending a few hundred volts through the unsuspecting monks had the desired effect. The crowd were delighted when they not only jumped in the air but shouted and cursed with some force.

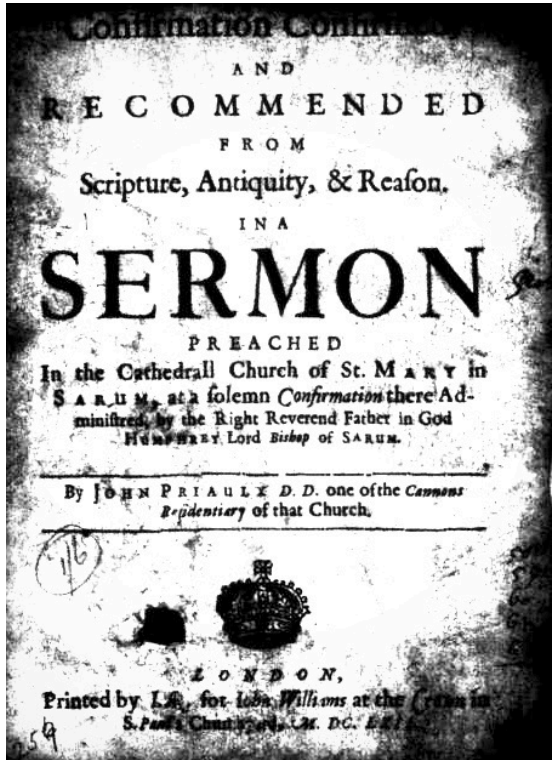
This experiment is supposed to be the origin of the telegraph! Incidentally, Nollet is credited with discovering Osmosis. The painting of Abbé Nollet is by Quentin de la Tour, dated 1753 and is in the Bavarian State Painting Collection. *It is also in the public domain.*

**TOMB TALK - John Priaulx**



**O**n the south wall of Salisbury Cathedral Nave (is a slate tablet in a stone surround inscribed: *Variae Eruditionis Ingens juxta conditur Thesaurus, Dnus Johanes Priaulx S T P, Southamptoniae natus Oxonii educatus. Magnum utriusque Ornamentum; Linguarum, Artium, Scientiarum, Peritissimus. Humanoris/Divinioris: Literaturaecultor, Cum paucis celebrandus, Qui cum Canonicatum/Archidiaconatum Sarumi: Residentia, Vigilantia, multum adornasset subito correptus morte Animam Deo reddidit, Pridie nonas Junii, Domini MDCLXXIV. AEtatis suae LX Laborum suorum fructum percepturus.*

James Harris (1825) translates the above as: *A man possessing an immense store of various kinds of literature, lies buried near this monument. Master John Priaulx, D. D. born at Southampton, educated at Oxford ; he was a great credit to both, having a thorough knowledge of all languages, arts, and sciences, both sacred and profane. In a few words, when he had honored the Canonry of Sarum by his residence, the Archdeaconry by his vigilance, he was seized with sudden death, and returned his soul to God, June 8th, in the year of the Lord 1674, aged 60, being about to receive the reward of his labours.*



ED: Note that STP is Professor of Sacred Theology and *Thesaurus* literally means treasure. Courtesy of *Internet Archive* we have the cover (right) of one of his printed sermons. The Venerable John Priaulx was educated at Merton College and held the livings of Fovant, Long Newnton and Berwick St John.

**SHERBORNE OLD & NEW**



**I** came across the print of Sherborne Old Castle (left) on the *Historic England* website - the New Castle is the 16<sup>th</sup> century Tudor one that belonged to Sir Walter Raleigh. The Old one was built by Salisbury's Bishop Roger (Chancellor) in the 12<sup>th</sup> century but it was passed to the Earl of Salisbury in 1330 by Edward III. It was perhaps in an attempt to establish that Sherborne Castle rightfully belonged to the bishops of Salisbury that it was



included with seven other episcopal properties in an application by Bishop Robert for a licence to crenellate dated August 1337. As the king had only recently ceded the castle to the Earl of Salisbury, the bishop could hardly have expected that the application would bring any immediate recognition of his rights to it.

However, in 1355, after William Earl of Salisbury's son, also named William, had succeeded to the earldom, Bishop Wyvil of Salisbury (Lord Privy Seal, died 1375) brought a writ against him in the king's court for possession of the castle, presumably on the grounds that as the Crown had relinquished its immediate interest, the bishop possessed it as an integral part of the episcopal estate at Sherborne. The earl, as was his right, chose to settle the question of ownership in a trial by combat, and the bishop, fearing that he might otherwise lose the case, was forced to agree. However, at the time appointed for the contest the earl's champion failed to appear when summoned, thereby leaving the bishop's champion unopposed in the field and therefore the victor by default. In the event it had been agreed that the bishop would pay 2,500 marks to the earl and 500 marks to the king for the return of the castle.

## THE BOWMEN OF MONS



The Bowmen of Mons drawn by A. Forrester for the Christmas 1915 edition of the Illustrated London News.

Anne Curry writes in *The Historian*: On 29 September 1914, Arthur Machen, a journalist on the *Evening News*, published in his newspaper a short story, 'The Bowmen'. In this imagined account of the retreat from Mons in the previous month, British soldiers saw St George and the ghostly archers of Agincourt fighting for them.

What is fascinating is the response which the article triggered, with some claiming they too had seen the vision and others seeking to discredit Machen as a liar. For the historian, it is equally fascinating to see a similar story in English chronicles written within 60 years of the battle. *On that day the French saw St George in the air over the host of the English fighting against them...thus almighty God and St George brought our enemy to the ground and gave us victory that day.* Both stories were inventions but they remind us of the powerful emotional response which historical events can produce as well as how the boundaries between literature and history are often blurred.