DORSET – THEN AND NOW FROM THE AIR

Gordon Le Pard

During the Second World War great strides were made in the field of aerial photography and photographic interpretation. Then as the allies were advancing across Europe they made a remarkable discovery. In 1940, as part of their plans for the invasion of Britain, the Germans had photographed much of southern England. Looking at these pictures it was immediately apparent how useful such images would be in the process of planning and reconstruction of Britain in the aftermath of the war. However the German photographs were not suitable, as they had been taken with a specific purpose in mind and only covered part of southern Britain: what was needed was a complete survey of the entire country.

The RAF was given the task, and completed it in a matter of months - between 1946 and '47 they photographed England, Wales and much of Scotland! The value of these pictures was immense and, since then, these surveys have been repeated on several occasions.

The sixty years since the photographs were taken has been one of massive changes in Dorset, towns and villages have grown, railways have gone and new roads have been built, in the countryside hedges have been removed, and trees have spread. The wartime infrastructure, still a feature of the landscape in 1947, has either disappeared or been altered almost beyond recognition.

The 1947 photographs have been used by professionals (including planners, archaeologists and ecologists) for many years, but have not been easily available to the wider public. In this profusely illustrated large-format volume, a selection of the photographs of Dorset are published, in many cases for the first time, alongside contemporary photographs of the same area. The changes may well fascinate, surprise and amaze – just as it is remarkable how some things remain gloriously the same.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

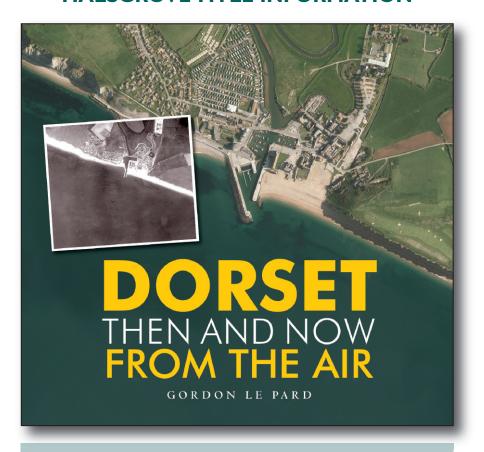
Gordon Le Pard is an archaeologist working for Dorset County Council, who has used these photographs almost on a daily basis. A few years ago he realised the value of carefully comparing old and new aerial pictures when he found that a deserted medieval village in north Dorset, which had been discovered through examination of the 1947 photographs, had not been recorded properly. It was far bigger than had been thought as the person who had discovered it hadn't noticed a tiny wisp of cloud which had hidden half of it! Gordon Le Pard is the author of several books about Dorset, including Dorset Shipwrecks and Dorset and the Sea.

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Ryelands Business Park,
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Somerset TA21 9PZ
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Fax: 01823 216796
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HALSGROVETITLE INFORMATION



Format: Hardback, 144 pages, 238x258 mm

profusely illustrated throughout.

Price: £19.99

ISBN: 978 1 871164 81 7
Imprint: Dorset Books
Published: October 2011



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HEN AND 1 THE AIR





Above: Portland Bill 1947 photograph reference 1821-4051, centred on grid SY 684 693

Right: Bournemouth Pier 1947 photograph reference 1934-3030, centred on grid SZ 089 903

Below: Example of a double-page spread.





