

Honorary Chair's Report 2018-19

Administraion

The Council continues to meet on alternate months to administer the running of the society. Its members elected at the 2018 AGM were:-

Hon. Chair: Maurice Handley

Hon. Secretary: Liz Stewart

Hon. Treasurer and Newsletter Editor: Dave Roberts

Membership Secretary: Chris Wood

Past Chair: Mark Adams

Events Organiser: Mark Adams (with subcommittee)

Ordinary Council Members: Ben Croxford, Roy Forshaw, Diana Goodier, Rob Philpott, Samantha Rowe, David Scott, Sue Stallibrass, Vanessa Oakden

Diana Goodier and David Scott will be stepping down this time and I would like to thank them for the smooth running of meetings (particularly Diana for providing tea, coffee and biscuits). Sub-groups of the Council meet to arrange activities such as preparing the Journal and organising special events and I would like to acknowledge this additional contribution made by Mark Adams, Sue Stallibrass, Rob Philpott, Dave Roberts Liz Stewart and Diana Goodier. A big thank you to all the Council members for their help and support.

Membership and attendance

In 2017-18 the society had 85 members including 3 honorary members and 8 institutional members. The membership this year stands at about 60.

The spectre of GDPR appeared early in the year and I would like to thank Chris Wood for his efforts as membership secretary to deal with the new requirements. Additionally I thank our Hon. Secretary for drafting a Data Protection Policy.

The society continues to meet in the Quaker Meeting House in School Lane. It is a convenient location in central Liverpool with good facilities and an ideal room for lectures.

Attendance at indoor meetings varies between 15 and 25 with an average of 19.

Field trips are less well attended and there may be a number of reasons for this - not the least the busy lives we all lead. It is no longer economical to provide coach transport to sites and we have to rely on car sharing and public transport.

Lectures and Field Trips 2018-19

After the AGM on April 19th 2018, we had the pleasure of a talk by our President, Keith Dobney, Professor of Human Paleoecology at the University of Liverpool. Diverting from traditional fare his talk 'Joining the dots - can archaeological science save the world' described how archaeologists can use scientific techniques to study ancient diets and understand how modern diets can influence our health. It was a well illustrated talk which gave us 'food for thought'.

On May 13th the society made a special visit to The Atkinson in Southport to see the exhibition 'The Vikings - Rediscover the Legend'. Its curator, Joanne Chamberlain, took us round an impressive display which included a unique opportunity to see Viking hoards from Cuerdale, Silverdale, Bedale and the Vale of York. After lunch, MAS member David Scott took us on a walk studying the architecture of Lord Street.

On June 9th MAS joined Merseyside Industrial Heritage Society for a visit to Castleshaw near Oldham. Led by Norman Redhead from the University of Salford we were able to see the remains of a Roman fort and fortlet, the Roman road, a medieval bloomery, a newly discovered monastic grange and numerous other features in the landscape.

On the beautiful sunny weekend of July 14/15th, a small group visited the Westmorland Dales in South Cumbria. The Saturday started in Orton, visiting the village church and exploring the area on footpaths we visited a large stone circle and the site of a medieval monastic grange. The afternoon was spent at the quiet secluded ruins of Shap Abbey. The next day was concentrated in the Smardale valley near Newbiggin on Lune. The area has a concentration of archaeological and historic features ranging from Iron Age settlements, Medieval cultivation 'strip lynchets' and rabbit warrens mapped as 'pillow mounds', a packhorse bridge and 19th century quarrying, lime kilns and an impressive railway viaduct.

Norton Priory was our destination on August 18th to be guided round the site by Frank Hargrave, the museum's director. Amongst the many exhibits was a letter written by Henry VII and skeletons displaying symptoms of Paget's Disease. An added bonus was to be entertained by medieval re-enactment of mock battles and demonstrations of medieval lifestyle.

Our series of talks in Autumn started on September 20th with 'Place Names of West Derby Hundred' by Pam Russell. Pam gave us a comprehensive introduction to place names and also some clues about their value to archaeologists.

On Saturday October 13th, MAS in conjunction with the National Museums Liverpool held a successful one-day conference 'Recent Developments in Merseyside Archaeology' at the Museum of Liverpool. The programme was as follows:-

Ron Cowell 'An update on the Lunt Meadows Mesolithic site'

Alison Burns 'Fort Crosby'

Vanessa Oakden 'Community Archaeology in Merseyside – sieving through our past'

Liz Stewart 'Digging up the Dirt: the 'dark' heritage of Pembroke Place from documents and archaeology'

Mark Adams 'Filling in the Gaps: The Neolithic and Bronze Age at Mark Rake, Bromborough'

Additionally a handling session with pottery from Rainford and Prescot was held by Jeff Speakman, Sam Rowe and Clare Cunliffe.

On October 18th Carolanne King and Ellen McInnes told us about the work of the North West Historic Graffiti Survey. Their work in Speke Hall was of special interest and it is hoped that surveys of other sites in the Merseyside area can be arranged in the future.

On November 15th, Lis Rushworth from the University of Liverpool gave a lecture 'Developments in the understanding of early man' about her research in to hominim development at Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania.

The Members' Evening on December 13th gave an opportunity for talks from Roy Forshaw about planned developments in Merseyside that never happened, Mark Adams' discovery of the remains of the Castle of Liverpool, Gina Muskett described her visit to see cave paintings in the Dordogne, Sue Stallibrass talked about her experience at an archaeological site in Croatia and a further episode in the fascinating history of Parr Hall by John Kern. The evening also included the non-competitive quiz and mince pies, tea and coffee.

For our talk on January 17th 2019, Gina Muskett gave a fascinating insight in to the Etruscan Collection at the World Museum, Liverpool entitled 'Fibulas, focolare and false teeth'. The collection includes gold jewellery, brooches, mirrors, vessels, ceramics and stone carvings.

There was a revelation in February 21st's talk by Steve Baldwin 'The Fort in the Wood - Lancashire's Lost Roman Fort'. This site at Burscough was unknown to many in the audience and Steve demonstrated how fieldwork and geophysical survey had revealed the typical playing card shape of a Roman Fort and a smaller forlet (similar to that at Castleshaw).

Continuing on a Roman theme Norman Redhead gave an intriguing and illuminating talk on March 21st about the Roman site at Castleshaw and also gave an update on the latest investigation at the monastic grange of Friarmere.

Other activities

During the summer a few members continued to work on the survey of the graveyard at All Saints, Childwall. In June there was an opportunity to join Mark Adams for an exploratory excavation in search of the remains of the Copper Works at Stanley Bank in St Helens.

The society continues to respond to planning applications where their is likely to be an archaeological interest - these are often brought to the attention of the society by members. We are fortunate to have Ben Croxford, Merseyside Historic Environment officer, as a member and he is a valuable source of information on all archaeological matters. MAS Council has provided letters of support for funding bids including those by

the CITIZAN project for investigation on the Sefton Coast and by the Cannington Shaw Trust for the conservation of a bottle making works - a scheduled monument in St Helens.

The society has a close relationship with the Museum of Liverpool, from which it receives a great deal of support. Council members Liz Stewart, Vanessa Oakden and Clare Cunliffe all work at the Museum. Additionally Sue Stallibrass and Rob Philpott both work at the University of Liverpool and report back on developments there.

Another Journal is in preparation and should be available soon. Thanks are due to Dave Roberts both for editing the Journal and producing the Newsletter in addition to his duties as Hon. Treasurer.

Although Liverpool's Big History Fair was cancelled the society regularly attends the Wirral History Fair and this year sold £90 worth of publications making it worthwhile. Thanks are due to all those who helped with this and also other similar events.

Finally I would like to give a special thanks to Mark Adams, not only for his work as previous chair of the society but also his current role as Events Organiser - a position which drives the society's successful activities.