



# Merseyside Archaeological Society Newsletter 3/2011

Registered Charity No 510831

## From the Editor:

Welcome to the new-look Merseyside Archaeological Society Newsletter. Over the next few issues I will try to improve the style of the Newsletter and hopefully increase its appeal to members. There may be a few changes in format along the way so please bear with me.

The Newsletter satisfies two purposes. Firstly, there is the 'News' bit which keeps members informed of what the Society is doing and keeping you up to date with some of the things that are happening in archaeology within Merseyside. Secondly, it provides an opportunity to publish and promote archaeology related work and events that are taking place in the region. There are a number of individuals and organisations with Society connections carrying out projects in the area who span both the professional and amateur archaeological community. This Newsletter is one way of getting news of your research and 'grey literature' out of the dusty filing cabinet and into the public domain. I am looking for contributions of about 500 words plus photographs for future issues. I am also considering including articles on walking tours and book reviews. Any other ideas are welcome.

With advances in technology there is the opportunity to make considerable improvements to the old-style Newsletter. Those who use e-mail will already be receiving this document on-line. This has several advantages. Firstly, it saves the Society money in postage costs. Secondly, you get a far better version with colour photographs and computer links to individuals and other sites of interest. If you are receiving this Newsletter by post and you can be contacted by e-mail please send your e-mail address to Eveline. For the contributor we now archive all our Newsletters on our website. Each issue has a unique number so referencing your work is not a problem.

This brings me to the current Newsletter. As well as information regarding our 2011/12 lecture programme and Christmas party this issue includes the latest news on the closure of the Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service and the announcement of a new post in the Field Archaeology Unit at NML. On the lighter side, there are articles on recent Society visits and a review of the 2011 Cheshire Archaeology Day. I hope you enjoy it!

## Merseyside Archaeological Society on Facebook

To go with the revamp of the website, the Society now also has a Facebook page. Up to date information about events will appear on this page, and you will get a reminder so you need never miss an event again. Its much more than that though, it is the place for all members of the Society to share information, or publicise events that they think might be of use or interest to others. We hope that you will find this a useful addition.

You can now follow us on Facebook:-

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1481822652#!/groups/151058304987687/>

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*Merseyside Archaeological Society publishes three newsletters each year. Contributions are invited on all aspects of archaeology in Merseyside. If you wish to contribute information that you feel would be of interest to members of the Society, please contact the Newsletter Editor. Please note that contributions may have to be edited.*

**Disclaimer:** Any views or opinions expressed by contributors to this Newsletter are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Merseyside Archaeological Society.

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Merseyside Archaeological Society

Web Site: <http://merseysidearchsoc.weebly.com>

### ***Increase in Subscriptions for 2012 and Lecture charge***

Those of you who attended the AGM will know that the meeting agreed the Council's proposal that from January 2012 membership subscriptions should be raised to the following amounts: Ordinary membership £15; Concessional membership £10; Family membership £18 and Institutional membership £25. It is felt that this small increase in subscriptions will help with increased costs associated with the general running of the Society. It is some years since subscriptions were last raised and although we are trying to keep our costs as low as possible this is becoming more difficult in the current economic climate.

In addition, the Council have agreed that a small charge of £1 should be made to members attending lectures. The charge for non-members will consequently increase from £1 to £2. It is not unusual for Societies such as ours to make a small charge to attend lectures in addition to the membership subscription. The reason for this is to off-set some of the costs that we pay for booking the lecture room at The Quaker Meeting House. Most people will agree that the facilities offered by The Quaker Meeting House are the best that can be found for the money in a convenient central City location and we hope you feel that the introduction of this small cost is justified.

### ***Closure of Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service***

Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service was set up in 1991. It provided an Archaeological Planning Advisory Service hosted by National Museums Liverpool on behalf of the 5 local authorities (Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley, St Helens and Wirral) that funded it. The main areas of work consisted of giving advice on individual development proposals, local authority management plans, strategies and policy. It also provided a guide on behalf of local authorities on how to fulfil their obligations and assist the work of developers and their consultants with regards to heritage within the local government planning system and gave advice on a range of planning issues associated with the conservation and management of the overall historic environment, that is, evidence of our past as seen in archaeological remains, historic buildings and landscapes. It also managed the development of and access to the Merseyside Historic Environment Record which it used to assist in the provision of advice and information to a range of enquirers including English Heritage and student and professional researchers. All of this was the responsibility of one person. The Service closed in March 2011 because the 5 district partners cut all funding.

On behalf of the Society, I recently wrote to the leaders of the 5 metropolitan boroughs asking them to explain why their funding has been withdrawn and what provision each of them intended to make for informed archaeological advice in the planning process, to meet the requirements of the Government's Planning Policy Statement 5, otherwise known as PPS5. The responses received indicated that the funding was withdrawn because the authorities felt that they were not getting 'value for money' and that they were seeking to fulfil their obligations by continuing to provide 'a service'. No detail was given on how this process will work.

This is a very unsatisfactory outcome. Funding has been terminated apparently because the districts have not received value for money, hardly surprising when the service was chronically under-staffed from the outset. On Merseyside, one person has fulfilled this role for the last 20 years where similar organisations have a team of 3-4 people doing the job. Consequently, an archaeological input into the planning process in the 5 districts in Merseyside is now dependent upon overworked conservation officers or similar who do not have professional archaeological qualifications or experience and who do not have access to the HER, which is the primary archaeological resource for informed judgements on archaeological matters in the planning process. If the process isn't working you don't throw it away, you fix it! Each of the 5 districts has contributed annually about £10,000 to the service, which covers salary and all overheads, a paltry sum which I take as a sign of how highly the districts have valued the archaeology of their areas. If this had happened 8 years ago we would have lost all the exciting and important archaeological discoveries made in advance of the development of the Liverpool waterfront.

Six months on we are just beginning to see the impact of all this. Communication with the local authorities over archaeological matters appears to be inconsistent and piece-meal. There are grave concerns that sites of archaeological significance and historical buildings will be lost if something is not done quickly. At a time when public interest in archaeology has never been higher, the people of Merseyside will lose out very significantly if this situation is allowed to continue. The last chance, in many cases, of uncovering the history and origins of their communities will be lost through this appallingly short-sighted attitude by the districts. The Council of the Society will be deciding what further steps need to be taken shortly. In the meantime, if any member becomes aware of development activity within areas of known archaeological sensitivity please send me details.

*Dave Roberts*

### **MAS Christmas Party – a date for your Diary**

This year's Christmas party will be held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30 in the Upstairs Room at **The Ship & Mitre** public house which is situated at the tunnel end of Dale Street adjacent to the flyover. The room is large and comfortable with a private bar. There will be more details available at the November lecture. We shall also publish further information on the web-site and on our new Facebook page in due course.

### **2011/2012 Lecture Programme**

We continue to hold our Thursday evening lecture meetings at the Quaker Meeting House in School Lane. As usual the talks start promptly at 7.30 pm but the room is open from 7.00 pm when we serve tea and coffee giving everyone an opportunity to socialize before the start of the formal meeting. Our next meetings will take place on .....

20th October: Steve Cross, *An Ancient Flash Flood and Stratigraphy in the Valley of the Kings*

17th November: Brigitta Hoffman, Liverpool University. *Title TBA*

6th December: *Christmas Party (see above)*

19th January: Anne Teather, Chester University. *The Neolithic art in the flint mines of southern England*

16th February: George Nash, Bristol University. *The Calderstones and its wider implications: a monument in transition*

15th March: David Symons, Birmingham Museum. *The Staffordshire hoard*

19th April: Colin Richards, Manchester University. *On the road in Rapa Nui (Easter Island)*

A small entrance charge will be made: Members £1 and Non-members £2.

### **New Community Archaeology Post at National Museums Liverpool**

Samantha Rowe is the newly appointed Community Archaeology Trainee for National Museums Liverpool. This post is one of a number of Community Archaeology Training Placements run by the CBA and is funded through a Heritage Lottery Fund grant. Samantha is an archaeology graduate from the University of York and has worked on a number of archaeological research projects across the country as a volunteer.

Since graduating she has worked as a commercial archaeologist and on two historic mapping projects based in North Wales and Greater Manchester to complement their Historic Environment Records. Over the coming year she will be working with community groups on a range of projects across the Merseyside region, giving local people hands-on archaeological experience.

Samantha will be learning how to manage and organise community projects and through working with local people and professionals will help to make archaeology fun and accessible to the public and to amateur archaeologists in the North West.

Contact: [sam.rowe@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](mailto:sam.rowe@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)  
Tel: 0151 4784560



### **Test Pitting at Rainford, 21-22 September 2011**

On 21-22 September a series of small test pits were dug in a back garden in Rainford. The dig was more successful than we could have imagined: we discovered a dump of kiln waste which included pottery wasters, saggars, and clay pipe, some material dating to the C16th. We now have bags upon bags of material waiting to be washed, catalogued and processed. If any Society member is interested in helping out please contact me. The work would have to be carried out at the Dock Traffic Office on weekdays. No prior experience is necessary.

*Sam Rowe*

### **CBA North-West Autumn 2011 Conference**

The Conference entitled 'Unravelling the Archaeology and Historic Environment of the North and North West' will take place in Kendal on 29 October. The venue is Kirkland Hall, next to Kendal Parish Church. See the web-site for details:

[www.britarch.ac.uk/cbanw](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/cbanw)



*Dave Lawrence at The Stones of Stenness*

***Report on Orkney trip 30 April -3 May 2011***

This spring 13 intrepid members of Merseyside Archaeological Society made the long trek north to Orkney to visit some of the finest prehistoric and Viking Age archaeology in the British Isles. After travelling by land, sea and air we met up in Stromness on the day of the Royal Wedding in time for some of us to explore this historic port, which was the last port of call for the Hudson Bay Company boats on their return to Canada in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Our programme for Saturday and Sunday was led by Dave Lawrence of Orkney Archaeological Tours, a professional archaeologist who lives in Orkney. The morning was given over to prehistory: Unstan chambered cairn; two stone circles, the Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar, which are situated on a quiet and beautiful strip of land between two lochs and Skara Brae, the stone village which was covered by sand for 5000 years. No amount of reading or TV can you prepare you for the experience of seeing these sites with your own eyes.

In the afternoon we moved forward to the Viking Age. We saw the Earl's Bu (dwelling) and the Round Kirk at Orphir, where an Orkney earl was slain, now the site of an Orkneyinga Saga visitor centre with some amusing art work by local school children, before making our way to Kirkwall, the capital of Orkney. Although a very small town, Kirkwall boasts the remains of two medieval palaces, the Earl's and the Bishop's, as well as St Magnus Cathedral. While we were there we saw a modern folk custom, as at least two bridegrooms-to-be were blacked up and paraded round the town centre by their friends to the accompaniment of car horns and hooters before being tied up to a cross outside the cathedral.

On the Sunday our first port of call was Maes Howe Chambered Cairn, which has a central chamber large enough to hold about 20 visitors at a time and boasts Viking graffiti in the interior. From there we went to the Iron Age site of the Broch of Gurness on the east coast of the island. This faces the west coast of the island of Rousay, where you can see more broch sites all along the coast. The second broch we visited was at Birsay, after which we walked across a causeway that is covered at high tide to the site of the Earl's Palace. We had a guided tour of the nearby 19<sup>th</sup>-century Barony Water Mill, the only mill in the

British Isles that still grinds here, an early form of barley. Finally, we ended the afternoon at the Farm Museum at Kirbuster, a traditional farmhouse whose internal arrangement of central hearth and built-in dresser is reminiscent of the stone houses of Skara Brae. After this we said goodbye to Dave, who not only provided a great deal of information about all the sites but also allowed the time and space to go round them on our own so that we could soak up the atmosphere.

While six of our group had to go home on Monday the seven of us who were left took a ferry to the nearby island of Rousay. We booked a guided tour round the island, which took us right round the coast before we stopped at Mid Howe. Here there is the famous Chambered Cairn, housed in a shelter so that visitors can walk above it and look down into the chambers of the tomb; well-preserved remains of a broch and related houses; and a mile-long archaeological trail covering Viking Age farms and religious buildings. To complete the tour we went inside Taversoe Tuick and Blackhammer Cairns, which had to be entered by the roof.

On Tuesday two more of the group returned to Liverpool. Four of those remaining hired a car and drove down to South Ronaldsay to visit the Tomb of the Eagles, a prehistoric tomb nearly as famous for its owner and discoverer as it is for the remains, while a fifth explored the medieval streets and buildings of Kirkwall and the sixth went for a walk in the countryside around Stromness.

Our last night at the hotel was tinged with sadness at the prospect of leaving Orkney. Surely few places can match the islands for their wealth of archaeological sites, their beauty and remoteness and the serenity this evokes in the visitor. Orkney is one of those places that all those who are interested in the past of the British Isles should try to see. You will be amply rewarded for the effort.

Thanks must go to Neil McLaughlin Cook for ably driving our minibus for three days and to Carole Brooksbank for organising the trips to Rousay and the Tomb of the Eagles.

*Julia McLaughlin Cook*

***Latest news on the Graveyard Survey Project at All Saints Church, Childwall, Liverpool***

Since the summer of 2009 the Merseyside Archaeological Society has been recording the gravestones at All Saints church in Childwall, Liverpool, with the aim of recording every grave in the cemetery. A database of all graves and individuals commemorated is retained at The Field Archaeology Unit at Liverpool Museum and is currently being updated. The compiled data will be made accessible to local communities for those interested in family history and genealogy.

On 2 July the society invited a group of children from the Young Archaeologists' Club to a recording session in the churchyard. Around 10 children and some parents came to the event where they were taught how to read the epitaphs and record the gravestones. They also completed rubbings of the decorative motifs on a few of the stones and were taken on a tour inside the church. All in all the day was a great success and the weather was very kind to us!



*Young Archaeologists Club visit to All Saints, Childwall*

A small group meet on a regular basis to continue the recording project at Childwall. If anyone is interested in joining us please contact Dave Roberts or Sam Rowe.

*Sam Rowe*

### **Cheshire Archaeology Day 2011**

The 2011 Cheshire Archaeology Day, organised by Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service, was held at the Winsford Lifestyle Centre on the 9<sup>th</sup> April. The venue has a large multipurpose hall as well as smaller meeting rooms and conference areas. Around 400 people attended with some 20 displays and stalls set around the walls of the hall. Jill Collins thanked the Cheshire Local History Association, Chester Archaeological Society and Middlewich Town Council whose support had made it possible to re-launch the event after a gap of 2 years.

Simon Ward from Cheshire West & Chester Council Historic Environment Team was the first speaker; ***'Reddy to fall into further decay unless it be speedilie prevented': Understanding and restoring Chester's Walls.*** He illustrated his colleagues work in undertaking the first complete survey of the walls which will now inform future consolidation and restoration. This followed the collapse of a section of the wall. While disturbing, this did have a silver lining for archaeologists, in that it provided a view of a complete cross section of the wall which revealed that due to ground conditions the Romans had also suffered masonry mishaps with the section.

Ian Miller, Senior Project Manager with Oxford Archaeology North spoke next; ***Murgatroyd's of Middlewich:*** The first part of Ian's talk told the story of George Murgatroyd a bit of a maverick who rebelled against the Salt Union Ltd monopoly and sank his own shafts looking for brine streams. He struck lucky and the remains of his works contain the last wild brine pump in the North West. It is now a Scheduled Monument in Brooks Lane industrial estate and is the only intact pump with an original shaft left in the UK. The second part focused on what to do with the standing and subterranean remains. ECOSAL Atlantis is a European Union funded Heritage Team which focuses on the culture and history of salt-producing areas

in the Atlantic. They have visited the site to talk about including it in a trail linking sites from mid-Cheshire with Portugal, Spain, France and others in the UK. Ian has been working with Middlewich Town Council on a restoration project after Heritage Officer Kerry Fletcher secured a £25,000 grant from English Heritage.

***Swords and Crosses: Looking at the Staffordshire Hoard*** was the title of the talk by Dr Kevin Leahy, the National Adviser on Early Medieval Metalwork to The Portable Antiquities Scheme. This was a real treat. To get a close view of the objects and have an expert point out and explain the symbology of the detailed engravings was fantastic as was the consideration of the origins and meaning of the hoard, I had no idea the objects were almost entirely parts of sword handles.

During lunch there was an opportunity to view and participate in some of the interactive exhibits such as pot washing and using the Cheshire HER database.

After lunch Dan Garner, the Project Officer (Archaeology), Habitats & Hillforts from Cheshire West & Chester Council talked about ***Prehistoric Promontories: Recent work on the Hillforts of the Cheshire Ridge;*** Dan is re-examining the archaeological evidence for six Hillforts on the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge (Helsby, Woodhouse, Eddisbury, Kelsborrow, Beeston and Maiden Castle). His work has resulted in new interpretations regarding the methods of constructing the hillforts defences and indeed questioning whether or not some of the earthworks are in fact defensive in nature. By re-opening old excavation trenches Dan has been able to obtain a number of environmental samples and radio carbon dates which have established a new chronology for the construction and occupation of the monuments as well as shedding new light on their function and the role they played in the landscape of the Cheshire plains.

The final thought provoking talk was by Chief Inspector Mark Harrison's on ***Heritage Crime and the steps that can be taken to combat it.*** Chief Inspector Mark Harrison has been seconded to English Heritage to advise the organisation on the best way forward - Under the strategic guidance of English Heritage, the Police (through the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)) and the Crown prosecution service The Heritage Crime Initiative (HCI) will seek to introduce systems, structures and partnerships, necessary to tackle offences such as architectural theft, including metal theft, criminal damage, illegal metal detecting, graffiti, vehicle nuisance and arson. A memorandum of understanding has been agreed to delineate responsibilities between the three strategic partners. This includes developing a nationwide network among enforcement bodies, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, professional groups and amenity societies.

Representatives from more than 40 organizations, ranging from The National Trust, The Church of England, Crime Stoppers and Ministry of Defence to National Parks, The Woodland Trust and The Historic Houses Association Canterbury City Council and Cheshire Council amongst others have formed the Alliance to Reduce Crime against Heritage (ARCH). ARCH is a voluntary national network that will be used to take forward the initiatives and galvanize local action. Local history societies, amenity groups, neighborhood watch and residents associations will be encouraged to raise awareness of the risk of criminal damage to historic sites and buildings in their area.

*John Roberts*

## Merseyside Archaeological Society July 2011 Field Trip

On the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2011, Merseyside Archaeological Society went on a field trip which would prove to be a remarkable day out. Arranged by Barry Faulkner and Roy Fletcher, the trip was to the site of the Poulton Research Project, near Chester. The tour was lead by an enthusiastic Mike Emery, Director of the Project.

At the Poulton site MAS members were shown a remarkable tree henge dating from the Late Neolithic; such a find is very rare for this far north. The henge had been reconstructed using identical types of wood: silver birch posts surrounding a central oak post. The types of wood used were determined from burnt remains found in the post holes; the builders burnt the wooden ends to preserve them and also burnt the clay of the circle. Later Bronze Age additions include a mound and ditch. A further two henges exist on the site.

We then went on to see the excavation of Poulton Chapel. In the middle of the Chapel a body was found and it is suspected that it is that of Sir Nicholas Manley, though this is still speculation for the moment. Outside the Chapel there is a large graveyard and 52 burials were retrieved last year alone. MAS members were shown a Roman ditch that lies below the level of the graveyard.

The Poulton Research Project has no direct funding; it relies on volunteers, donations and inventive money-making schemes. For example, forensic science students from Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) use the Chapel site to learn how to excavate a burial, and LJMU pay the Project for this training.



*The Tree Henge at Poulton (photo courtesy of Joyce Hughes)*

The tour then went on to Holt and we were given a splendid tour by a husband-and-wife team from the Holt Historical Society. The tour centred on the splendid bridge between Holt and Farndon, the Church and the Castle.

From Holt we went on to look at a motte-and-bailey near Aldford. I was expecting to see a wooded hillock of some sort. However, I was astounded by what I saw. The motte is just magnificent, and clear of trees. The ditch extends under the Church graveyard and has caused the bottom course of stone to fall away on parts of the graveyard wall. The Church itself is partly built over the ditch and subsidence of the Church wall that is over the ditch can clearly be seen. The bailey extends right up to the Church and is best seen by climbing the motte. Everyone was impressed with the site and it was a fine way to end an excellent day trip.

*Chris Wood*