

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2023

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LOGO REVEAL INSIDE

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BIRKENHEAD PARK

Step back in time Page 3
On the right path





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Summary

It's a jam-packed edition this autumn! Over the next few pages, we remember the late Issy McCann, a beloved society member, and recall her time with MAS. We experience Birkenhead Park and Priory through the eyes of a society member; take a walk of discovery through Loggerheads Country Park; reveal the excellent research of All Saints' Childwall graveyard during the Childwall Heritage weekend; explore the Knutsford Hoard's intricacies through a curator's talk; and reveal the new MAS logo chosen by your votes. Finally, we look forward to our upcoming winter events and invite you to join the festive cheer with our Christmas Quiz. Enjoy the autumn read, and stay tuned for our upcoming winter edition!





OBITUARY FOR ISSY MCCANN

Thoughts on the Passing of a Long-time MAS member

Members will be saddened to learn of the death in August of Isabel (Issy) McCann, a member of MAS for many years. I got to know her on a weekend field trip to Hadrian's Wall. She also joined trips to the Isle of Man, Orkney and Peterborough/Northamptonshire.

In recent years Issy didn't manage to get to MAS lectures in town, but she did participate in zoom meetings.

Issy had wide interests and was jolly company. We met up to visit art exhibitions and never ran out of things to talk about. I was in awe of her knowledge and enthusiasm about art, archaeology, literature, history and music (very proud of her Yorkshire choral roots!). She was also a keen painter, showing at the Sefton Open exhibition at the Atkinson, Southport.

Our thoughts and condolences go to her husband John and family.

Nancy Jenkins



BIRKENHEAD PARK



A Walking Exploration of Heritage

Sunday 3rd September 2023 and we were blessed with beautiful sunny weather for our morning walk in this historic park. Claiming to be the first publicly funded park in the world, and the inspiration for Central Park in New York, Birkenhead Park opened in 1847. It was designed by Joseph Paxton who is best known for the gardens at Chatsworth and designing Crystal Palace.



Opening year for the park carved in stone at the stop of the Grand Entrance

Our walk was led by Scott, a very enthusiastic Wirral Park Ranger, who showed us some of the highlights and recounted the history of the park. We started, and finished, at the modern Visitor Centre which houses a timeline of the park's history; a café selling drinks and light lunches; and an attractive, well kept garden in front.



Visitor's Center

From there, we made our way to the Jackson Memorial, an obelisk which formerly had a drinking fountain, named for John Somerville Jackson who authorised the creation of the park.



Then we walked down to the aptly named Grand Entrance designed in the form of a triumphal arch with Ionic columns, through which carriages would have been driven at the time of the installation of the park. The gates are now firmly closed and no vehicles have been allowed inside the park since lockdown in 2020.

Grand Entrance with Ionic columns

Nearby is the East Field where we heard about the Spitfire which crashed in the park in 1942 and known to Mark Adams who was part of the excavation team about 15 years ago. Luckily the pilot's actions avoided the plane hitting houses in the area and he ejected to safety.



MAS Members at the Grand Entrance

We walked to the Lower Lake, crossing the Rustic Bridge, a reconstruction of the original humpbacked bridge of the 1880s. Through a woodland path we came to the Swiss Bridge, apparently copied from covered bridges in Switzerland but looking more like a Chinese Bridge. It has been targeted by vandals on several occasions including an arson attack in 2015 which cost £20,000 in repairs.

A slight detour took us to The Rockery which is an area of very large boulders and intended to symbolise a rock fall in the Alps when viewed from the Swiss Bridge but the sightline is now obscured by trees.

Finally, we made our way back to the lake and our last point of interest, the Roman Boathouse. It was originally used for access to small boats on the lake and has a lovely pebble mosaic floor laid in 1990.

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Swiss Bridge



View of the Roman Boathouse



Pebble Mosaic floor in the Roman Boathouse

Our tour took in the areas of most historical interest but there is much more of the park to explore.

Megan Munro



BIRKENHEAD PRIORY AND MONKS FERRY

Visiting the other side of the Mersey



Birkenhead Priory, founded in 1150 by Benedictine monks, has free admission and is a multiperiod religious site. The 1150 Chapterhouse still survives as a church and the undercroft from approximately 1220 now houses the museum.

Inside Birkenhead Priory

During our trip, we were able to wander as we wished. I wanted to look at the priory tower and after scaling the 101 steps came out on the tower balcony. It offered splendid 360-degree views of the Wirral and Liverpool waterfront.

The Priory is right next to the shipyards and looks down onto the graving docks. The visit coincided with the arrival of a large naval support vessel being directed by tugs into the graving dock from the River Mersey. For me, this took over most of my visiting time watching this rare event. Having used up my visit time watching the fun from the top of the tower, I intend to revisit the priory as there is much more to discover.



View of the Naval Ships entering the adjoining graving docks from the Priory tower

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Part of the Chester and Birkenhead Railway, the site of Monks Ferry railway station is a few minutes walk from the Priory. It opened in 1838 but shortly closed following objections by the Woodside Ferry operators. Reopening again in 1844, it operated as a passenger and freight terminal until 1878 when passenger services moved to the newly opened Woodside Station. Monks Ferry concentrated on goods and coal until closing in 1961. The tracks survived until 1967.

I recall in my teenage days visiting the terminus after walking through the railway tunnel linking Monks Ferry with Birkenhead Town Station. The freight buildings at Town Station were still there in the 1980's even though the line closed at least 20 years before. All has now been cleared and Monks Ferry is a residential area with splendid views across to the Liverpool skyline. All that remains are the sandstone river walls that supported the ferry slipway.

We spent a splendid period leaning on the ferry railings admiring the Liverpool waterfront whilst listening to Mark speak about the trials and tribulations and skulduggery in getting the original line permission to access the waterfront.

A big thank you to Ann and Mark for organising such a varied and interesting day.

Roy Forshaw

LOGGERHEADS FIELDTRIP

A 'River'ing Time

On 15th July, Roy Forshaw and Sue Stallibrass met 15 MAS & MIHS members at the Loggerheads Country Park on a very rainy Saturday morning. Roy briefed us on what is left of the local industries and how water management in the area was a key to their success or failure. The main industries were lead mining, limestone quarrying and logging, and they date from at least the Medieval and Tudor periods. There might have been activity in the Roman era but, as of yet, there is no real evidence of occupation.

We walked alongside the River Alyn, which was flowing slowly below our path and which, on Roy and Sue's early visits last year, was a dry river bed. We first visited the mill race and what was left of the workings of the restored Pentre mill (1796), which had been a sawmill and a flour mill during its life. The river suddenly disappears from view as it flows through the limestone sink holes which have caused so many problems for the lead miners and logging businesses in the area. We followed the public path and alongside this was the man-made leete (or water channel) dating from 1823 which powered the waterwheels. There have been more recent attempts to overcome the problems of the sink holes via the insertion of large pipes to culvert the leete, but problems still continue further down the route.



Walkway alongside the River Alyn

Roy supplied us with excellent guidance notes which explained the history, geology and archaeology of the area.

It was difficult to imagine this now overgrown and forested area as a place with several industries, with its "...waterwheels, tunnels, tramways, water channels and ...spoil heaps" - Roy's notes.

The odd spoil heap was visible occasionally as part of a hill that looked as if it shouldn't be there, and we peered into large cave-like rocks where the original mines were situated. Further along the path was the Glyn Alyn Mine wheel pit and pumping house, with much of its remains hidden in the undergrowth. The mine operated in the 1860s.

There were many land ownership disputes caused by the poor parish and county boundaries, and which resulted in the name of the area, as the landowners were “at loggerheads with each other”! Roy talked of the resulting skullduggery with the miners working under each others' land to extract the valuable minerals in the area. Some well-known individuals were in dispute with each other including the Grosvenor family, the Lords of Mold and the Earls of Derby.



Site of the original mines

It was a fascinating day and thank Roy and Sue for their excellent research and guidance.

Anna Alexandra

CHILDWALL HERITAGE WEEKEND

A Field Day in a Graveyard

In May this year Dave Roberts and I collaborated on a field day for MAS members based on the work done over the last 12 years or so recording the graveyard at All Saints' Childwall. Dave concentrated on the nuts and bolts of the project, and the database which has been produced from the work of all the MAS members who helped to record approximately 2400 graves. I added the "human interest" side of things by researching the background of various people buried in the graveyard and leading a guided tour. In September I repeated the graveyard tour as part of their Heritage Open Days at the request of the church. We looked at graves from the late 18th century through to the 1930s, the earliest being William Roscoe's parents and the latest being Margaret Beavan (first woman Lord Mayor of Liverpool). Rather than just stringing together a collection of random individuals, I tried to make it more coherent by linking their stories and showing how they were part of the All Saints' community.

Among the early graves is that of Joseph Need Walker, builder of the Mansion House at Calderstones and the man responsible for setting up the Calderstones in a "druids circle".

Not far from him is the grave of the Spencer family, local farmers, one of whom reported taking cartloads of sandy soil from the site of the Calderstones, thus erasing the last traces of the original passage grave.

A more unusual gravestone, in the shape of a roofed cross, commemorates Cornelius Sherlock, a successful late Victorian architect.



Monument to Cornelius Sherlock

He received several commissions from Andrew Barclay Walker who has the largest and most elaborate memorial at All Saints'.



Monument to Andrew Barclay Walker

Between them they were responsible for the Walker Art Gallery and the Picton Reading Room.

Another group of notables were connected with the founding of the University of Liverpool. James Campbell Brown was the first holder of the Grant Chair of Chemistry and has a curious triangular pillar as his gravestone.

Not far away is his colleague Richard Caton, first Professor of Physiology and a Lord Mayor of Liverpool. He is remembered by a beautifully carved Celtic cross.



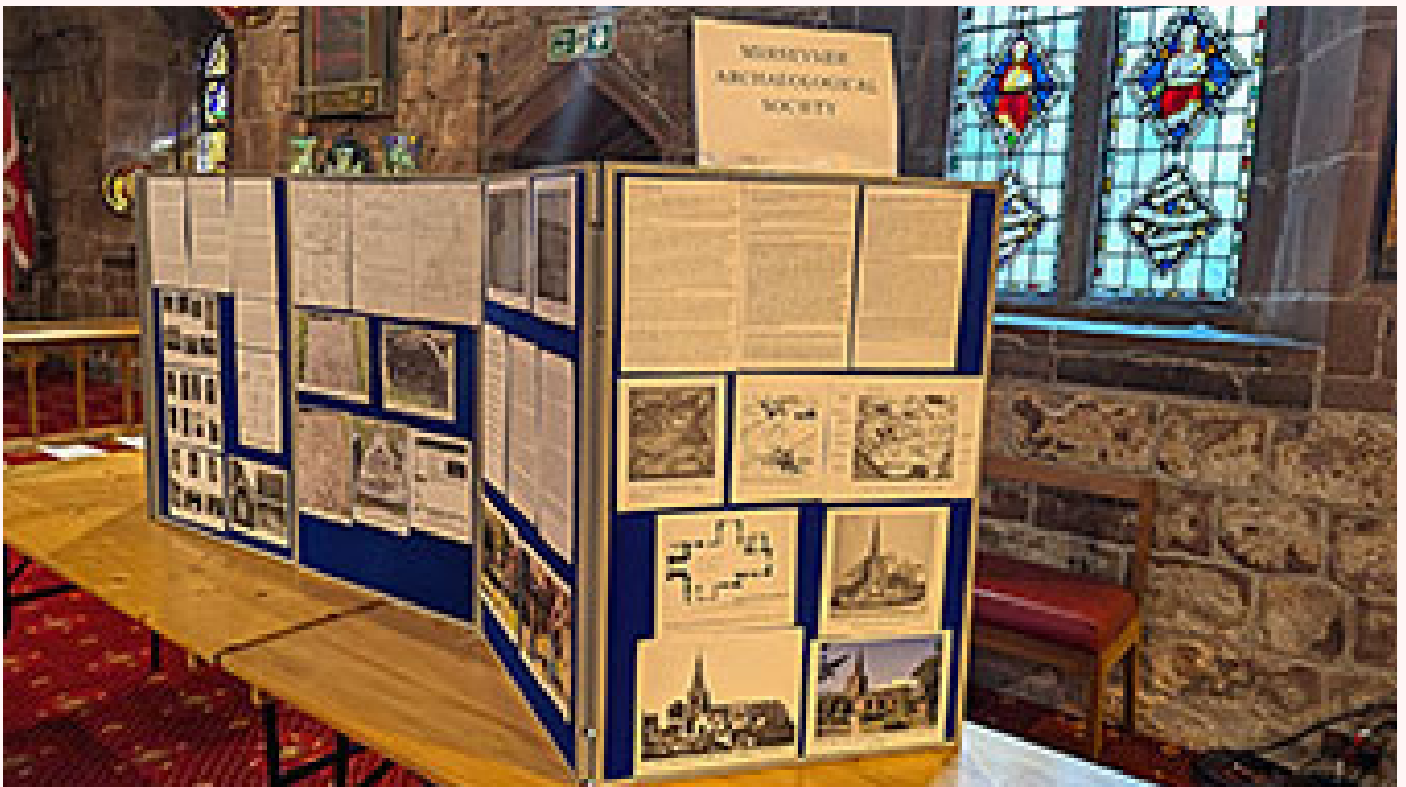
Monument to Richard Caton

Geoffrey Hughes died in the First World War and is buried in France, but recorded on his family's gravemarker.

His brother gave money to the University to buy the Wyncote estate in Geoffrey's memory, part of which became the Geoffrey Hughes Athletic Ground on Mather Avenue, still in use 100 years later.

All Saints' is full of fascinating stories of local families and a microcosm of Liverpool history.

Diana Goodier



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Childwall Display Material

In addition to the guided tours the Society was invited to put on a display summarising the work that has been done during the course of the Survey at All Saints'.

Over the 2 days more than 300 people visited the Church including a few MAS members. The display material generated some interesting discussions and we received a few requests for assistance from people who were researching their family/local history. All in all, a very successful weekend and a good opportunity to promote the work that the Society has done at Childwall.

Dave Roberts



THE KNUTSFORD HOARD

'Beyond the Label' Curator Talk



Knutsford Roman Coin and Jewelry Hoard

Unique ID: LVPL-B44185

<https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/632111>

This talk, at the Museum of Liverpool on 14th October 2023, was part of a series presented by the National Museums Liverpool curators giving the public a chance to meet the curators and find out the 'behind the scenes' story of well-loved objects from the collection.

The talk was given by our very own Vanessa Oakden. The hoard (which I wasn't aware of!) was found in 2012 by detectorist, Alan, who reported his find to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, where Vanessa was Finds Liaison Officer at the time.

Vanessa and a team of archaeologists from the Museum of Liverpool worked with Alan to recover and record the hoard.

The hoard consists of coins - 101 silver denarii, and two sestertii - along with three brooches and two finger rings. Roman 'Cheshire Plains' pottery found nearby was possibly a container for the pieces, but recent ploughing broke the pot and spread the finds across the field.



Silver denarius of Vespasian, (69-79)

Unique ID: LVPL-884202

<https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/507366>



We were told early on in the talk that we would have to go to Congleton Museum to see the Hoard, where it is currently on display - due to return to Liverpool Museums in 2025. However, the museum has life-sized replicas, which were passed around for us to see and handle.

We were able to appreciate the intricate craftsmanship and elaborate design of the trumpet-shaped silver gilt brooches, decorated with native British-style swirling patterns. The silver rings are much plainer with carnelian semi-precious stone intaglio (decorative stone setting).

Cast silver trumpet brooch
Unique ID: LVPL-9BCE31

<https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/507605>



Silver finger-ring with red semi-precious stone

Unique ID: LVPL-9E5A56

<https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/507718>

Also mentioned were several other Cheshire hoards, including Malpas (2014) and Church Minshull (2004). There are similarities between the brooches found here and those found in Knutsford.

N.B. The events are ticketed and charged for – free for National Museums Liverpool members. This talk sold out, so book early for future dates listed on the Museums’ website. Follow the link below to explore upcoming talks.

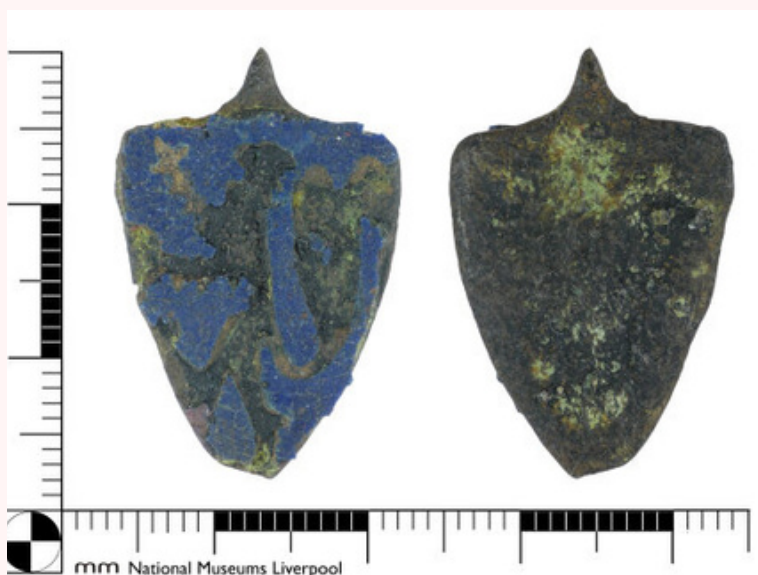
<https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/whatson/beyond-label>

Susanne Christian



LOGO REVEAL

Updates on the New MAS Logo



The original logo design was inspired by a Medieval horse harness pendant decorated with the heraldic design of the lion rampant. These pendants have been found in the northwest but are not limited to a specific region, having been discovered by metal detectorists all over England.

Lion Harness Pendant

Unique ID: LVPL-E8085C

<https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/1121827>



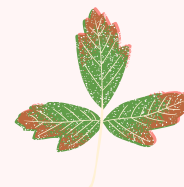
The MAS Council has been collecting votes and opinions on updating the original MAS Logo to give it a fresh new appearance which jointly showcases both Liverpool and Archaeology. Members were asked to vote on a design and colour (see [Summer Newsletter 2023](#)). We are excited to reveal the results here!



What you thought:

“ A refreshing change which will become more recognisable and will appeal to younger people and a wider group. ”

“ There is no reason to change the present logo. It is recognised and changing it will only create confusion. ”



“ I think if we could have a secondary logo with Merseyside Archaeology Society around the edge, that would be nice for banners and larger publications when the logo is big. I think the Liver bird gives us a defined Merseyside identity that is lacking in the current logo. ”



Results!

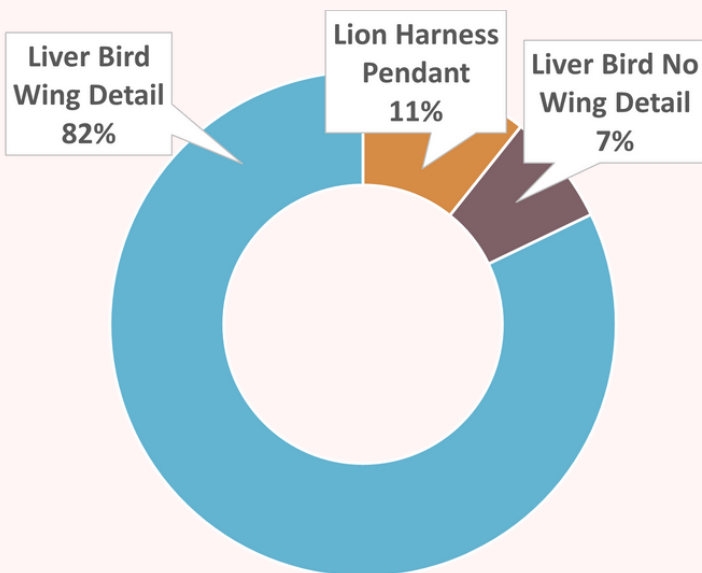


Original Design
Lion Harness Pendant
 Dark Pastel Green

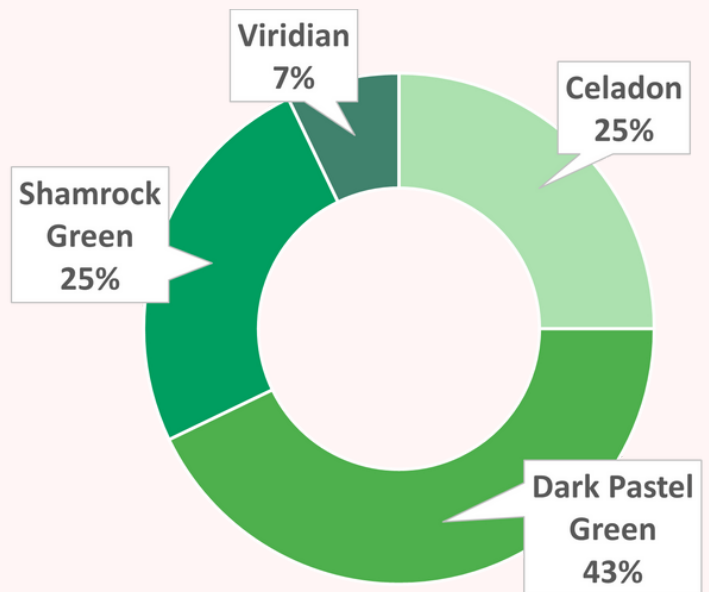


New Design
Liver Bird with Trowel and Wing Detail
 Dark Pastel Green

Design Results



Colour Results



You have all voted to update the logo to include the Liverbird to give the society a fresh new look, but with the continuity of the same Dark Pastel Green as the old logo. This is the perfect blend of continuing a previous feature but allowing MAS to progress with changing times.

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UPCOMING EVENTS



See what we've got coming up next!

Summer is over and as the cold weather starts to settle in, MAS turn to their Autumn/Winter Talks season.

Our winter evening talks take place on the third Thursday of each month until April 2024.

During the midwinter months (including January) our meetings are held online via Zoom, to avoid travel in inclement weather. Online "doors" open 7.15pm for the 7.30pm meeting.

Please see the latest monthly MAS Programme & Online Resources bulletin for further details.



CHRISTMAS QUIZ!

When: Thursday 14th December 7.30pm

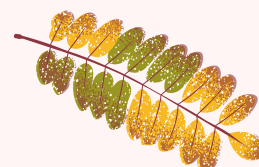
Where: ZOOM

Who: Anyone and everyone is welcome!

Join us for some festive fun with a lighthearted quiz and a chance to chat and socialise with other MAS members

MAS are starting to plan for next year's summer events and would love to hear your suggestions. Anywhere you've been this summer that you think others would also enjoy (or sites on your hit list that you haven't made it to yet)? Do you have information about online resources that you think other MAS members might be interested in?

Please contact our Events Organiser Sue Stallibrass at:
Sue.Stallibrass@liverpool.ac.uk



Rainford Finds Marking Session

In 2013 MAS worked in partnership with the Museum of Liverpool on the Rainford's Roots community archaeology project. This was a National Lottery Heritage funded project which undertook archaeological investigations in the village of Rainford, near St Helens, to explore the post-medieval pottery and clay pipe manufacturing industries in the area.



Pottery from Rainford is now being marked by the Museum of Liverpool's archaeology team with its museum accession number.

If you would like to help with the marking and find out more about the collection, please get in touch with Curator Vanessa Oakden at Vanessa.Oakden@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk.

Sessions will take place on a Wednesday & Thursday in January.