



Merseyside Archaeological Society Newsletter 1/2019

Registered Charity No 510831

MAS Membership Subscriptions 2019

Subscriptions for 2019 fell due on 1st January. A renewal form is enclosed with this Newsletter

A note from the Chair

The one day conference in October organised in conjunction with the Museum of Liverpool was a success and well attended. The day trawled through the last ten thousand years of Merseyside archaeology starting with Ron Cowell's work at the Mesolithic hunter-gatherer camp at Lunt, illustrated with a virtual tour of the site 9000 years ago. Mark Adams typically covered a huge range of ideas and investigations ranging from Neolithic to late medieval, Liz Stewart talked about the intriguing history of Pembroke Place court housing and Galkoffs Jewish butcher's shop, and Alison Burns gave a well illustrated talk about Fort Crosby. Finds specialist Vanessa Oakden described some recent additions to the portable antiquities collection and also community archaeology projects and Clare Cunliffe and Jeff Speakman presented an impressive collection of pottery from Rainford including some incredible examples re-assembled from a jigsaw puzzle array of broken pots. The speakers were mainly drawn from museum staff, highlighting the strong relationship between the society and the museum. A big thank you to the speakers, organisers and helpers.

In November I attended the Greater Manchester Archaeology Day and one of the best talks was given by Samantha Rowe who will be remembered for her principal role in the highly successful Rainford's Roots Community Archaeology Project. Sam has completed her PhD and is now Finds Officer at Salford Archaeology at the University of Salford. An article related to one aspect of her research appears in this Newsletter. Recently, Sam has been sifting through over 6000 sherds from the recent excavation at the Shakespeare North Theatre site in Prescott - amongst the 17th and 18th century finds was a broken, but superbly decorated slipware plate. Perhaps we can look forward to a talk from Sam - we already have a fascinating series of lectures in the Spring term.

In common with many societies, MAS is run by volunteers who serve on the Council or contribute to the society in other ways. In April we will be having our AGM and if anyone would like to become involved in helping to run the society then why not put yourself forward for election or just arrange to come along to a Council meeting to see what its like.

Meanwhile best wishes for 2019.

Maurice Handley

Merseyside Archaeological Society

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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 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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Answers to the Quiz that appears on pages 5-6

1. a Roy, b Mark, c Warren 2. d, 3. b, 4. c, 5. a, 6. b, 7. b, 8. d, 9. a, 10. a, 11. c, 12. b

MAS Lectures at The Quaker Meeting House, Liverpool

Merseyside Archaeological Society meets at the Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool, L1 3BT. Tea and Coffee is available from 7 p.m. and lectures start at 7.30 prompt. All are welcome including non-members. There is a small charge.

Thursday, January 17th 2019 ‘Fibulas, focolare and false teeth: the Etruscan Collection in World Museum, Liverpool’; Gina Muskett

World Museum in Liverpool has one of the most representative Etruscan collections outside Italy. Bronze brooches, mirrors and vessels, ceramics of various types and intricate gold jewellery, including splendid examples of false teeth, illustrate aspects of life and death, giving a fascinating insight into pre-Roman society in central Italy.

21st February 2019 ‘The Fort in the Wood-Lancashire’s Lost Roman Fort’: Steve Baldwin

This talk will describe the results of recent fieldwork and geophysical survey on a Roman military site in South Lancashire conducted by Steve Baldwin. Although fieldwork to date has been limited it has already changed some of our ideas about Roman military activity in the area and the site has potential to radically revise our current understanding of the Roman occupation of the region.

21st March 2019 ‘Recent archaeological discoveries at the Roman Fort and Medieval Grange in the Castleshaw valley, Saddleworth’: Norman Redhead

This talk will discuss recent fieldwork on the medieval Grange of Friarmere, held by the Cistercian Roche Abbey, near Rotherham, from the late 12th century to the Dissolution of 1538, and Castleshaw Roman fort. Medieval granges were estate farms to provide food surpluses for the use of the mother abbey and intensive farming was undertaken by labourers under the supervision of lay brothers. Fieldwork on the fort site has shown that the archaeology is far more complex than was thought and that multi-phased, stratified Roman archaeology survives across much of the site.

Thursday April 18th AGM followed by a lecture from Sue Stallibrass entitled ‘Where the wild things are: hunting in the frontier region of Roman Britain’

Hunting wild game animals was the sport of civilian and military elites, but their attitudes towards wild animals were extremely complex and often ambiguous or downright contradictory. This talk examines a range of archaeological evidence including animal bones, religious iconography, writing tablets and artefacts, to consider whether people were hunting for pleasure or enlightenment.

Archaeological work in Merseyside in 2018

The planning/development management system oversaw several archaeological investigations in 2018. In Liverpool there were a number of evaluations at Princes Dock. These investigated the site of the fort, exposing the earlier phases of dock walls and locating structures probably associated with the dock’s construction. Elsewhere in the city centre there were investigations of Drury Lane, finding mostly 19th century cellars, and of Hardman House, formerly St Philip’s Church, an iron church built in 1816 by John Cragg and Thomas Rickman. Further out, at Garston, a number of features were only identified as of prehistoric date due to radiocarbon dating. A paper looking at the importance of scientific dating of aceramic features will appear in the MAS journal in due course. At Melling an excavation of an 18th century farm found a dump of kiln waste and pottery of late 16th and early 17th century date. The pottery is very similar to the material from Rainford and a paper on this development will appear in the MAS journal in due course. Finally, an excavation at the site of the Old Hutt at Halewood (see MAS Journal Vol. 8) did not find any traces of the buildings or of the moat. This may have been because the site is still buried at depth beneath modern dumped material.

Details of these sites are available via the Heritage Gateway website (<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>) and digital copies of the reports can be requested from the Historic Environment Record (Merseyside.her@sefton.gov.uk).

Ben Croxford

A Volunteering Opportunity....Graveyard Recording at All Saints, Childwall

Graveyard Recording at All Saints Childwall will continue in 2019. We are looking for additional volunteers to finish this work and welcome any MAS members who might be interested. No prior experience is required. For further details of what we are doing and how to become involved please contact Dave Roberts (e-mail: drandpr@blueyonder.co.uk. Tel: 427 2980).

A Faithful Interpretation of the Past

The Museum of Liverpool has a new display of finds, exploring themes of religion in everyday objects. Open on the first floor, until the end of March.

Faith and spirituality are a very important part of many people's lives, and archaeological evidence suggests that this has long been the case. Including Roman, medieval and modern objects, this display looks at religious references in objects – picking out the detail which might have meant a lot to the people who owned and used them.

When we look at objects in the 21st century we bring our own beliefs and pre-conceptions to them. We try to find out about what people believed from some of the objects we find. Even small details might give us ideas about people's faith and world-view. However, even in modern objects religious details are overlooked, such as the lettering 'Elizabeth II DG REG FG' on coins, standing for 'Dei Gratia Regina Fidei Defensor': 'By the Grace of God, Queen. Defender of the Faith'.

Liz Stewart



Roman patera handle featuring Cupid.

Dale Hall

Members who are residents of Mossley Hill will probably have noticed the ongoing work at the old University halls of residence, Dale Hall, on Elmswood Road. The site is being redeveloped by Elan Homes for housing and as part of the planning condition has been the subject of an archaeological strip, map and sample investigation undertaken by archaeologists from RSK.

The excavations were undertaken in light of evidence thrown up by a desk based assessment noting the potential for prehistoric archaeological remains. The grounds of the halls contain a small mound covered in trees with large undressed fragments of sandstone protruding from it. The mound is depicted on the 1841 Garston tithe map with mature trees so is clearly not part of the 19th Century landscaping of the site and was tentatively identified by Andy Towle of RSK as a possible Neolithic passage grave. The mound will be preserved in the new development because of its mature trees, although adjacent areas are being built upon.



Top soil stripping in progress



The tumulus

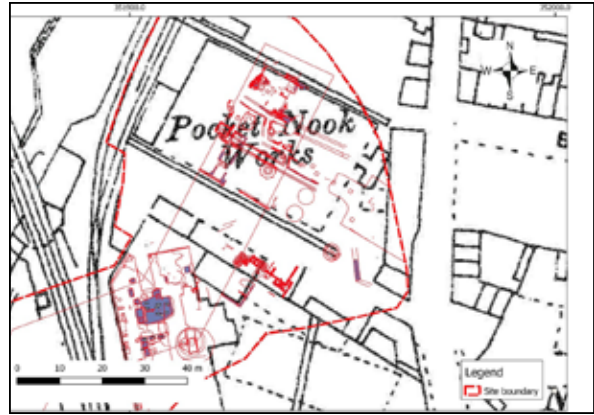
The archaeological investigations, which took place last year, found very few archaeological features, though a post-hole was noted close to the potential tumulus. It contained no finds but a large lump of charcoal from a small well-defined post hole proved to be more interesting. It has a radiocarbon age of 3790 BP +/- 27. i.e. in the Neolithic period. Although not conclusive, the presence of this feature strengthens the case that the mound is indeed a tumulus and forms part of a developing pattern of Neolithic settlement on Merseyside, complementing the evidence from Mark Rake, Bromborough excavated by Museum of Liverpool in 2016. This evidence suggests that Neolithic settlement in the area is largely represented by small, scattered post-holes and pits representing short-lived occupation of a site and that permanent buildings, such as those excavated at Manchester Airport in the late 1990s are probably relatively rare. The findings raise questions on methodology for evaluating and defining similar sites in the area, and will be the subject of further discussion in a forthcoming MAS article.

Atlas Street

In spring and summer archaeologists from RSK excavated the site of the Pocket Nook Smelting Works on Atlas Street, St. Helens. The works was established in 1854 to smelt copper ores probably imported from South America via Liverpool and operated until the 1890s when the site was taken over by the Waterloo Iron Foundry.



Remains of the Atlas Foundry



Excavated features superimposed on the 1894 OS map

The 19th century phases had been disturbed by construction of the Waterloo Foundry in the late 19th century but the walls of flues and the wall of the building survived at the western end of the site.

Mark Adams

Assessing the condition of battle-related artefacts from conflict sites



Figure 1: Moreton Corbet bullet with severe pitting, discoloration and lack of surface detail

I have recently completed my PhD entitled “Factors affecting the survival of metal ploughsoil assemblages: an assessment of lead bullets from 17th-century fields of conflict”. I will discuss one aspect of my work here: methods for assessing the condition of artefacts.

The majority of archaeological data on battlefields consists of unstratified metal artefacts in ploughsoils. Topsoils are vulnerable to disturbance from weathering, agricultural activities and erosion, and the condition of buried artefacts is often unclear and hard to estimate. For instance, are artefacts stable in the topsoil or are they corroding at an accelerated rate? Several factors affect an artefact’s condition in the ground, including the soil chemistry and geology, the historic and current land use, and the composition of the object itself. By systematically assessing battlefield assemblages, we can begin to understand what state of condition objects are in and we can begin to design strategies to reduce the impact various factors have on their deterioration.

I devised a systematic assessment for 17th century lead bullets and applied it to three assemblages from Civil War sites of conflict. The assessment addressed the condition of bullets using a set of categories, scoring the bullets accordingly. The condition assessment analysed the smoothness of the bullet surface, the preserved shape of the bullet, visible surface detail, the amount of corrosion products, and the stability of the surface of the bullet. The assessment centred on surface condition as this is where the most valuable archaeological data is available. The surface of a bullet can tell us how the object was manufactured, how it was loaded and fired, whether it impacted a target, and its history in the ground. Corrosion and abrasion in the ground affect the condition of these objects and ultimately how much archaeological data we can obtain from them. Common signs of actively corroding lead are powdery surface residues, severe cracking, surface breakdown, flaking and denting, all of which formed a part of the assessment.

Some bullets scored very high as their surfaces were pitted, cracked and no surface details were visible (figure 1). Others scored very low and were in very good condition with smooth stable patinas/surfaces and clear manufacturing marks (figure 2). The bullets were then analysed spatially to correlate soil conditions with object condition to address the reasons behind the condition of bullets. The three case studies used were the battlefield of Edgehill in Warwickshire, the siege site of Moreton Corbet in Shropshire, and the siege site of Wareham in Dorset (see location map figure 3).



Figure 2: Edgehill bullet with smooth stable patina and clear manufacturing marks



Figure 3: Location of Civil War sites mentioned in text

Overall, the bullets from Edgehill were in very good condition. This is down to their burial environment. The site resides in an area of alkaline clay with impeded drainage, which reduces oxygen flow in the soil and reduces the rate of corrosion. The lack of sand in the soil also reduces abrasion damage to the bullet surfaces. Clay particles are plate-like with smaller pore spaces between particles, resulting in slower oxygen and water flow, which will slow down the rate of corrosion. Significantly, the battlefield consists of large areas of well-preserved medieval ridge and furrow which has not been cultivated since at least the mid-18th century. The lack of ploughing and soil disturbance in the upper 20-30cm of the soil in the last two centuries has clearly aided the preservation of the buried assemblage.

Bullets from Moreton Corbet and Wareham were in poorer condition, particularly at Wareham where 70% of the assemblage were in fair to poor condition. Soil conditions at Wareham are acidic (pH 4.5) and very sandy, resulting in well drained oxygenated soils. Sand particles are large and granular with large spaces between particles, allowing greater rates of abrasion as well as oxygen and water flow, which will promote corrosion. The landscape has also been under almost constant arable cultivation since the early 19th century, which will have accelerated the process of corrosion of bullets in the soil.

My research has shown that the most significant factors affecting the condition of bullets in ploughsoils are soil pH, soil texture, and historic land use. To promote the best preservation of bullets on battlefields, soils should be neutral to alkaline, with a clay content greater than 30%, and sand content <20%, and ideally be retained under pasture as ploughing has the most damaging effect on the preservation of buried material. Further work needs to be carried out on more collections and other object types in order to evaluate whether similar patterns occur with other metal types. Nonetheless, the results of this work suggest that ploughing should be restricted where vulnerable topsoil assemblages may be present in order to reduce corrosion rates and preserve assemblages for future generations.

Samantha Rowe

MAS Christmas Quiz 2018

1. At our members' evening in December 2017, talks were given by Mark Adams, Roy Forshaw and Warren Kern. Match the talks to the speaker.

- a) Maps and plans of Merseyside b) Tong Church, Shropshire c) The keys of Parr Hall, St Helens

2. In January 2018, Fred Bezombes demonstrated drone application to virtual 3D mapping at three of the following sites. Which one was mentioned but NOT shown?

- a) Scladina Neanderthal Cave, Belgium b) Poulton Archaeological Site, Chester c) Williamson's Tunnels, Liverpool
d) Burnt remains of the Echo Arena car park

3. In February Joanne Chamberlain gave us an enthusiastic talk about the display in the Atkinson museum of artefacts collected in the 19th century by Mrs Anne Goodison. Which one of the following is the subject of the Goodison collection?

- a) Mycenaean ceramics b) Egyptology c) Football memorabilia d) Chinese silk

4. In March Lynn Smith told us about an internationally significant statue of a saint which has been at Norton Priory since the late 14th century. Which saint is it?

- a) Saint Augustine b) Saint Anthony c) Saint Christopher d) Saint Ethelfleda

5. Professor Keith Dobney's talk in April 'Can Archaeological Science save the World?', addressed the issues of diet in modern humans compared with that of our ape, Neanderthal and hunter-gatherer ancestors using the ancient DNA of oral microbiota. He said that the human body has more bacteria than human cells by a factor of:-

- a) 10 b) 100 c) 1000 d) 1000000

6) In May we visited the 'Vikings' exhibition at The Atkinson in Southport. We saw 'HNEFATAFL' which is a Viking name for:-

- a) a meatball b) a board game c) an anvil d) hack silver

7) In June we visited Castleshaw Valley with Norman Redhead. He took us to the site of a medieval BLOOMERY - a small furnace which smelted ironstone to produce a lump of iron called a:-

- a) pig b) bloom c) ball d) casting

8) During a weekend in July a small group saw a stone circle near Orton and strip lynchets in Smardale; both sites are in the former county of:-

- a) Cumberland b) Northumberland c) Yorkshire d) Westmorland

9) MAS visited Norton Priory in August and on display was a letter written by King Henry VIII during the dissolution of the monasteries. The abbot had prevented the king's men from entering the monastery and Henry demanded that the abbot should be:-

- a) hung, drawn and quartered b) deported c) beheaded d) defrocked

10) In September, Pam Russell gave a fascinating talk on local place names. She explained that Pendle Hill consists of the Celtic word pen meaning 'hill' and the Old English hyll also meaning 'hill'. Thus Pendle Hill is a:-

- a) triple tautological compound name b) triple redundant compound name c) tertiary multi-lingual constructive name
d) technically convoluted name

11) 'APOTROPAIC' is a category of historic graffiti described in October by Carolanne King and Ellen McInnes; it refers to:-

- a) construction marks made by a joiner or stone mason b) individual commemoration using initials and dates
c) protective marks to ward away evil d) sacrilegious graffiti

12) Our November speaker was Lis Rushworth who gave a talk about the environment of early hominims in:-

- a) the Karkos Mountains, Iran b) Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania c) Cresswell Crags, England
d) the Gobi Desert, Mongolia

The answers can be found on Page 1.