



It is with regret that MAS Council is cancelling all meetings until further notice due to the Corona Virus. This includes our AGM which is postponed until later in the year. The AGM papers with the revised date will be sent to members in due course. We also hope to run some of our field trips later in the summer and we will issue details when the current situation eases. We will keep you updated on any future changes which may occur via email, the website and social media channels. With this in mind we also plan to issue monthly bulletins to keep you all in touch. If you know someone who is not on email, it would be helpful if you could let them know. We hope that all members, their families and friends, are able to keep safe and well.

A view from the Chair

The study and excavation of industrial dwellings is an integral part of archaeology and a recent book by Liz Stewart, ‘Courts and Alleys – a history of Liverpool courtyard housing’, sheds light on the living conditions of the working classes in 18th and 19th century Liverpool. The black and white photographs and descriptions of life in a courtyard house leave the reader in no doubt about the unsanitary and crowded conditions in which people lived. Disease was rife and the average age at death was 15 with 65% dying at less than 5 years old. In the 21st century, we live in vastly superior conditions where typhus and cholera, diseases that were common in Liverpool’s slums, are now rare. Yet we still suffer from pollution and a virus can now virtually shut down a country, leaving people without any public transport, confined to their homes, and factories and schools closed. I wonder what this pandemic will leave in the archaeological record?

My partner is an avid family historian and like many, she enjoys visiting places where her ancestors lived, worked or were buried. Recently we visited a small cottage in rural North Wales that had been the home of one of her forebears. Nearby was a ruined medieval castle and the whole area was full of historic and pre-historic sites. I started to reflect on the idea that some of her ancestors (and possibly mine) had lived there for thousands of years. If we look at the arithmetic, the number of direct ancestors doubles in each generation - two parents, four grandparents and so on. Ten generations back gives us 1024 ancestors (or 2 to the power of 10). For more than ten generations we start to get enormous numbers and further back in pre-history, the number of ancestors will exceed the population of the world. So the conclusion is that we must all be related somewhere along the line. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why we are interested in our shared history and heritage and one way of satisfying this interest is through archaeology. This human inter-relationship is also the way in which our shared DNA allows a virus to spread rapidly and with such devastating consequences.

Meanwhile, I shall finish my term as Chair and will be replaced when we hold an AGM. I will however continue to take an active interest in the Society, not least in helping to organize our AIM 2020 conference on 10th October.

I hope that all your family and friends will be safe and well in this uncertain time.

Maurice Handley

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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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From the Editor

Over the coming weeks many of you will be occupying yourselves by reading, using on-line resources etc. In future bulletins I would therefore like to include short articles (a paragraph or two) to include photos, reports on visits to sites of interest, book reviews, details of internet links to web-sites, blogs, podcasts etc. or anything else relevant to archaeology which may be of interest to the membership. Please send contributions direct to me. As a starter, there are links below to some of the on-line resources currently available.

Dave Roberts

On Line Resources

This is a small selection:

CBA Archaeology Hub

This is an excellent place to start. It is crammed full of interesting articles, lectures, activities for children, YouTube links, TV programmes etc. There is enough material here to occupy you for hours:

<https://blog.archaeologyuk.org/2020/03/24/archaeology-resources-hub/>

British Museum

There are 3,212 panes of glass in the domed ceiling of the British Museum's Great Court, and no two are the same – a 360-degree view in a virtual tour lets viewers examine each and every one. Beyond this magnificent space, viewers can find the Rosetta Stone, Egyptian mummies and other ancient wonders. The museum's interactive infographic platform, History Connected, goes into further depth of various objects with curators, along a timeline.

<https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/the-british-museum>

Natural History Museum

From the diplodocus to the dodo, botany to butterflies, giant crystals to specimens in jars ... the Natural History Museum's vast collection has long been a favourite of both Londoners and tourists. Get lost in the corridors and gallery spaces – one treat is Dippy the dino, who despite recently going on tour still makes an appearance in the entrance hall in this interactive online guide.

<https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/natural-history-museum>

Washington, D.C.'s National Museum of Natural History

This is one of the most-visited museums in the world and offers a peek at its wonderful treasures with an online virtual tour of the entire grounds. Viewers are welcomed into its rotunda and are greeted with a comprehensive room-by-room, 360-degree walking tour of all its exceptional exhibits, including the Hall of Mammals, Insect Zoo, and Dinosaurs and Hall of Paleobiology.

<https://naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour>

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Virtual Museum

The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Virtual Archaeology Museum displays videos, detailed three-dimensional (3D) models and mosaic maps of shipwrecks from the 19th and 20th centuries. Discovered by BOEM in the course of underwater research and oil and gas exploration, these shipwrecks are important submerged cultural resources that provide a unique window into our collective history. Artifacts in these shipwrecks can now be examined in thousands of feet of water. Through the use of 3D models, shipwreck sites can be viewed as a whole and changes monitored over time.

<https://www.boem.gov/environment/virtual-archaeology-museum>

MAS Conference - date for the diary

MAS is organising a Conference entitled 'Archaeology in Merseyside 2020' to be held at the Museum of Liverpool on 10th October 2020. Planning is well underway. Further details will be announced in our monthly bulletin over the coming months as the current situation develops. In the meantime please keep this date free.

Museum of Liverpool Emerging Archaeologists

Museum of Liverpool Emerging Archaeologists (MoLEA) will launch in 2020 as an exciting new opportunity for young people aged 16-24 to gain direct hands-on experience of their local archaeology through workshops and projects. MoLEA will meet up to ten times a year, during school holidays, for practical sessions with a focus on archaeology and will provide members with the opportunity to develop new transferrable skills and gain insights into archaeology. Sessions will offer practical hands-on experience and will take place in the Museum of Liverpool's archaeological finds room. Young people aged 16-24 who are not currently studying archaeology in higher level education are eligible to join. Dates and details of events will be announced in due course.

Vanessa Oakden

Orkney Memoirs

In April/May of 2011 MAS embarked on what is still its most ambitious summer expedition in terms of distance and temporal reach. The trip was to the Orkney Islands, to visit the abundance of Neolithic and Viking sites on the islands.

The first trip was to a chamber tomb on a headland on the Loch of Stennes, dated to around 3000 BC. The choice for location of the site has had various theories. It was thought the tomb (and similar ones) were placed in territories, this then morphed into a theory that they were on trade routes. However, the precise reason for choice of location is still a matter of debate. The tomb consists of a number of cells that emanate from the central passage



The next trip was to the Stones of Stennes and the Ring of Brodgar. Both of these date to around 2500-3000 BC and it has been shown that both were surrounded by ditches with mounds on the outside. In other words, they are henges. Of the 60 stones at Brodgar, 20 or so are still standing and half of these were re-erected at the start of the 20th century. When one of the stones was erected it was found to have Norse runes carved into it. The runes were twigs and have been translated as 'Bjorn'. Although translated by a scholar (Olson), the theory is not widely accepted.



The settlement of Skara Brae consists of the remains of houses. These were built of stones, topped with either animal skin or turf. Large amounts of whale bones have been found in the houses and - bizarrely, fragments of North American spruce. The theory is that this was drift wood.

There were visits to other sites, too numerous to mention, but the highlight of the trip was the Ness of Brodgar. This site lies on the strip of land that contains the Stones of Stennes and Ring of Brodgar. The Ness is a monumental complex dating from about 3200 BC but was closed down around 2500 BC. Many of the structures have very thick (3-4 m) walls, with piers, hearths and recesses. One of the structures was closed with a large slaughter of cattle followed by dismantling. The bones of the slain animals were found around the structure.

If you have the chance to visit Orkney I can say with confidence that you will not be disappointed.

Chris Wood.

Early Medieval escutcheon from Rushton, Cheshire West and Chester (LVPL-65CF33)



This is a cast copper alloy zoomorphic escutcheon from an early medieval hanging bowl dated c.AD 500-700. The escutcheon is in the form of a horse head and neck. The terminal has a stumped, rounded snout with an indentation running horizontally across the end. Sitting above the snout is the animal's head which has a prominent brow with a deeply incised hole for an eye on either side of the head. Beyond the head is a slight groove, after which two worn bumps are present, perhaps formally representing the ears.

Behind the ears, the neck of the object curves into a C-shape. At the top of the neck are details of the mane represented through a series of incised diagonal lines that stem from the centre of the neck downwards on both sides. There are at least three of these lines on each side.

© National Museums Liverpool

At the terminal of the neck is a portion of the plate that was originally attached to the vessel. The plate has an inverted sub-triangular shape and has a slightly concaved face. The attachment plate and snout of the animal are precisely level. The plate has a length of 24mm; width 17mm and thickness 2mm. The object has a dark brown and light green patina with some pitting on the surface.

This piece was originally one of a set of hooked-mounts, normally three, attached by their plates around the body of a circular copper-alloy bowl and fixed below the rim so that each hook projected above it. Each hook held a metal ring with a cord or strap attached used to hang the bowl from a central point. Hanging bowls are specialist luxury vessels with Roman-period origins, and were made in the early medieval period only in Britain and later Ireland. They were highly prized objects and were often included in burials.

A published example can be found in *West, S. (1998) A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Material from Suffolk, East Anglian Archaeology, Suffolk County Council. p.315 fig.156.*

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