



# Merseyside Archaeological Society Newsletter 2/2013

Registered Charity No 510831

## MAS 2013-14 Lecture programme

Our season of lectures starts next month. Meetings are held at The Quaker Meeting House in School Lane in the City Centre. The room is booked from 7 p.m. for tea and coffee and lectures start promptly at 7.30. All welcome - including non-members.

### Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> October

Gina Muskett, Curator of Classical Antiquities, National Museums Liverpool

*'Bryan Faussett: a pioneer of Anglo-Saxon archaeology'*

Between 1760 and 1773, Rev. Bryan Faussett excavated over 750 Anglo-Saxon burials, all close to his home in Kent. This evening's talk explores how a clergyman from Kent succeeded in excavating one of the finest groups of Anglo-Saxon material ever discovered, now part of the collections of National Museums Liverpool.

### Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> November

Ron Cowell, Curator of Prehistoric Archaeology, National Museums Liverpool

*'Excavations at a rare prehistoric hunter-gatherer wetland settlement at Lunt Meadows Sefton, Merseyside'*

The Museum of Liverpool are currently excavating the site of two Mesolithic houses dating to about 8000 years ago in the floodplain of the River Alt. This is a deeply buried, stratified site with associated wet deposits that should provide a detailed picture of the contemporary landscape. As such this makes Lunt Meadows potentially one of the most important in the country for Mesolithic studies.

### Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> December

*Christmas Meeting*

This year our annual pre-Christmas meeting will feature short talks from local archaeologists, including Sam Rowe, Community Archaeologist.

If you have heard a particularly interesting talk please pass the information on to Gina as an idea for a future speaker. [DrGeorgina.Muskett@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](mailto:DrGeorgina.Muskett@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

## Merseyside Archaeological Society on Facebook

You can now follow us on Facebook:-

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

## 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 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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### ***The Merseyside Historic Environment Record (HER) and Archaeology on Merseyside***

Since the last Newsletter further discussions between the local authorities, English Heritage and NML have taken place regarding the future provision of a Merseyside HER. It is believed that a resolution has now been found and that there will be a formal announcement shortly. This is good news following two and a half years of uncertainty. However, it is still unclear what processes the local authorities have implemented to take on the planning issues formerly dealt with by Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service particularly around the policies outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is hoped that we shall have further detailed information to pass on in the next Newsletter at the end of the year.

### **West Kirby Museum**

The newly refurbished West Kirby Museum is now open. Formerly known as the Charles Dawson Brown Museum, it was hidden away for over a century, available to view by appointment only. Charles Dawson Brown was the local historian, antiquarian and benefactor who preserved the ancient stones which were being unearthed during the rebuilding of St. Bridget's Church in 1869. These stones form the core of the museum collection.

The old museum room has been completely transformed into a modern, spot-lit and accessible display area and the museum space now extends into a second room, allowing sufficient space for the exhibits to be enjoyed by the public. The collection tells the story of a thousand years of St. Bridget's Church including pre-Norman, Norman, Medieval and recent acquisitions relating to the church. It is supplemented with information about the old village of West Kirby, the old school and other items found in or around West Kirby.

The stone collection includes 10<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Saxon stone cross fragments, a Saxon font, Viking grave slabs, and a 12<sup>th</sup> century child's coffin. There are some fine architectural pieces including Norman pillar bases and capitals, stone heads and window tracery.

The museum is located within the newly created St. Bridget's Centre, St. Bridget's Lane, West Kirby. The museum research group meet weekly in one of the large rooms within the Centre and regularly mount displays of their work at special events.

We opened with a celebration weekend in mid July to coincide with the national Festival of Archaeology. The research group put on a splendid display which created a lot of interest and there was a selection of archaeological hands-on activities for all ages.

There is a website to get up-to date information – [www.westkirbymuseum.co.uk](http://www.westkirbymuseum.co.uk)

We are in the process of arranging our winter opening and expect to open every Saturday morning 10am – 1pm. Please check the website for further details.

*Christine Longworth*

### **'Life and Death - Stories of Norton Priory'. A conference to be held on Saturday 26th October at Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool.**

Tickets costing £35 (£25 concessions) each, including a buffet lunch and refreshments, can be obtained from the reception desk at Norton Priory or by visiting their website at: [www.nortonpriory.org](http://www.nortonpriory.org) or telephone 01928 569895

Speakers to include:

Lynn Smith - Senior Keeper The Norton Priory Museum Trust

Dr Andrew Abram - Lecturer in Medieval History, School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology, University of Wales, Trinity Saint David

Dr Martin Heale - Lecturer in Late Medieval History, School of History, University of Liverpool

Shirley Curtis-Summers - PhD Researcher, University of Liverpool

John Larson - former Head of Sculpture Conservation, National Museums Liverpool

Jane McCormish - Field Officer, York Archaeological Trust

Tom Holland - Author and TV Presenter

Conference Chair - Frank Hargrave, Director, The Norton Priory Museum Trust.

### **CBA North West Autumn Meeting**

The CBA North West 2013 Autumn meeting will be held on Saturday 9th November at Waddington, Lancashire. The meeting is entitled 'The Vernacular Architecture of Buildings' and will include a guided walk. Details of the venue and further information, including a registration form, will be available at [http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbanw/CBANW\\_meetings\\_intro.html](http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbanw/CBANW_meetings_intro.html) shortly.

## **Royal Archaeological Institute Conference, Chester**

A public lecture entitled 'Re-assessing the transformation of rural society in the Roman Rhineland' will be delivered by Professor Nico Roymans on Friday 11th October at 7.30 at the Riverside Innovation Centre. Places are free but must be booked in advance by e-mail to [csraison@gmail.com](mailto:csraison@gmail.com). Further information is available at [www.royalarchinst.org/conferences](http://www.royalarchinst.org/conferences).

Abstract:

Central in my lecture will be the study of the transformation of rural communities in the Roman Rhineland following their integration into the empire. I will focus attention on the first two centuries AD in the province of Lower Germany and the adjacent hinterland of Belgic Gaul. The integration of these regions in the imperial power structure triggered fundamental social changes, the most spectacular manifestations being the introduction of Roman-style towns and the associated urban culture, and the creation of a highly militarised frontier zone with the Rhine limes as the central axis. Just as important, however, and inextricably linked to this was the transformation of the countryside, where at least 90% of the population lived.

I will analyse developments from a rural perspective, based on a multi-dimensional approach. I am not opting for a single all-compassing 'grand theory', but rather a pragmatic, eclectic approach that takes account of social, economic and cultural aspects, and looks at structures changing over time as well as the agency of individuals and groups. In my lecture I will discuss the following topics: 1. Reconsidering rural settlement patterns; 2. The agrarian basis of the rural economy; 3. Rural change and the agency role of veterans; 4. Case study: the villa of Hoogeloon and the archaeology of marginal area; 5. Material culture and the articulation of interconnectivity and regionality. I will finish with some prospects for future research.

For many regions, a reasonably good picture of the rural settlement patterns has emerged in the last decades, thanks to a dramatic increase in large-scale excavations in combination with surveys and the systematic registration of sites. This enables us to re-assess the rural settlement patterns. The habitation densities of many landscapes have proven to be considerably higher than was assumed until recently, and in the so-called villa landscapes the relative proportion of post-built sites appears to have been seriously underestimated. Until now, studies have placed too one-sided an emphasis on stone-built sites, while post-built sites that are more difficult to detect have been virtually ignored.

This re-evaluation of settlement evidence has major ramifications for the study of rural changes. First are the demographic implications. Everywhere, we should reckon with significantly higher population densities than we have previously assumed. Secondly, the new findings have implications for our social interpretations of rural landscapes. Especially in villa regions, the variation in settlements has proved greater than we thought, and we probably should assume complex relationships of dependency between the post-built farmsteads and different kinds of villas.

What strikes us most are the large regional differences. Perhaps the most important insight within regional archaeological research over the past decades is that Roman rural landscapes didn't form a homogeneous whole in terms of either their physical appearance or social organisation. Stimulated by the post-colonial agenda, much more attention is now being given to the heterogeneity and regionality of rural landscapes.

Finally we should not forget that the Rhineland was situated in the Germanic frontier zone of the Roman empire where troops were stationed on a vast scale. Although Rhineland archaeology has traditionally placed a heavy emphasis on both Roman military studies and rural research, the theme of interconnectivity between the military and the rural world long remained an underexplored field of study. This theme allows us to gain a better understanding of the social changes in the countryside and in particular the agency role of veterans in this region that was illustrious for its intensive ethnic recruitment.

## **Re-Capturing the past of Salford Quays. A one day conference at Ordsall Hall, Salford on Friday 18th October 2013**

2014 will be the 120th anniversary of the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal, and it is 30 years since the closure of Manchester Docks. This conference aims to illustrate and explain the history and archaeology of the docks and to discuss their transformation to Salford Quays. Further information and a booking form can be found at [www.mrias.co.uk](http://www.mrias.co.uk).

## **Graveyard Recording at All Saints Church, Childwall**

Excellent progress has been made this Summer with over 1000 graves now recorded. This year work will continue through the Autumn. If you are interested in joining this project please contact Dave Roberts. Tel 0151 4272980 email: [drandpr@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:drandpr@blueyonder.co.uk)



*Excavating at Rainford*

## **Community Archaeology in Rainford**

### ***Rainford's Roots Project Update***

Rainford's Roots launched in January this year and so far has seen a lot of success. The project aims to increase people's knowledge of the history of Rainford village near St Helens, whilst widening participation and dissemination of community archaeology in the region.

Over the summer the project team has carried out a number of test pit excavations in the village, to investigate the archaeological deposits around the village core. The team along with volunteers from the community have uncovered a wealth of artefacts including pottery ranging in date from the 16th-20th centuries, clay tobacco pipes, glass, and post medieval flint.

In April the project uncovered more of a deposit of 16th century fineware ceramics which had been identified in 2011 on an earlier community dig. A whole range of cups and mugs were uncovered at the site, alongside kiln furniture which had all been dumped in a field boundary ditch running through the heart of the village. This community dig coincided with a commercial watching brief at Rainford tennis courts, where over 2 metric tonnes of 17th and 18th century pottery was recovered. Some of the vessels found during these two excavations are currently in a temporary display at the Museum of Liverpool on Liverpool waterfront until the end of September.

In July, the project hosted a number of events during the Festival of Archaeology 2013, including a number of artefact handling sessions, displays, and walking tours of the village. Further events will take place throughout

the project.

In August the project carried out an excavation at Rainford library on Church Road. Rainford library is the former site of a public house; one of many in Rainford. In the mid 19th century a pipe shop was built on this site, later to be known as 'Laithwaites'. Pipe production on the site ceased c.1912, but the building was intact until the construction of the current library, built in 1955. This pipe shop was one of a great number in operation in and around Rainford at this time. Investigating known former industrial sites helps us understand the activities that were taking place in the village, and highlights the sorts of materials and objects that were being produced, used, and traded in Rainford.

### ***Rainford History***

Rainford has always been a farming community with some of the earliest farms and houses situated on the outskirts of the current village core. In the early 17th century, the clay tobacco pipe industry began to flourish in the village, with pipe shops being built alongside farmsteads, and then later on in the village core along the main roads of Church Road, Mossborough Road, and Pasture Lane in particular. The Rainford's Roots project aims to shed light on the industrial history of the village, through various means of surveys, excavations, documentary research and finds analysis, and sharing these discoveries with local communities.

### ***Opportunities to get involved***

#### ***Book***

As part of the project, a book and walking tour are being developed, exploring the history of the village, including some of its more significant industries and sites. We would like contributors to help research some of the local industries, buildings, and families of Rainford, to include as case studies in our project publication. This would be perfect for somebody looking for a small concise research project that has a guarantee of getting your work published. If you are interested in helping out with the project, please contact us.

#### ***Finds Processing***

A wealth of material has been recovered from recent excavations in Rainford, which all needs to be processed and catalogued. This is an ongoing project

based at the Museum of Liverpool and anyone is welcome to help out. Please contact us to learn about our latest sessions.

### Contact details

By Email: [rainfordsroots@gmail.com](mailto:rainfordsroots@gmail.com) or Telephone 0151 478 4560. Up to date information can be found at [www.rainfordsroots.com](http://www.rainfordsroots.com)

### Museum of Liverpool court housing oral history project

Kerry Massheder is the Council for British Archaeology's Community Archaeology Placement holder based at the Museum of Liverpool until April 2014. Kerry currently serves on the MAS council, is a PhD student at the University of Liverpool and is particularly interested in industrial archaeology, oral history, workers' housing and community archaeology. To record and share her placement experiences she regularly updates her blog at <http://kerrymassheder.wordpress.com>.

As part of her placement Kerry is working on an oral history project to capture memories of Liverpool's court housing. She writes....

*'Members of MAS who have visited the Museum of Liverpool may recall the reconstruction of court housing in The People's Republic gallery. The reconstruction provides visitors with an insight into typical poor quality housing available to Liverpool's working class from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*



Liverpool Court House

*'Courts' were a form of back-to-back housing built around a narrow courtyard. Typically they were small, overcrowded, of poor quality and lacked sanitation and drainage resulting in them becoming 'slums'. Slum clearances occurred from the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and sadly no examples of court housing have survived.*

*Within the Museum of Liverpool collection we have maps, photographs, models and contemporary written descriptions of court housing. Now, we are looking to record first hand memories of Liverpool's 'courts'.*

If you can contribute memories to the project, or would like further information, please get in touch with me [Kerry.Massheder@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](mailto:Kerry.Massheder@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk) 0151 478 4033.'

### MAS Visit to York - 27th July 2013

A small group of members made the train journey to York on a warm sunny day to be expertly led by Peter Connelly, Director of Archaeology at York Archaeology Trust and archaeology graduate of Liverpool University. Our first stop was at the area around the modern station located just outside the city walls, to be told the original station was positioned just inside the walls. Both station sites lie above Roman archaeology since they are near to the Roman route which led to the river crossing. Following this route we soon reached the south bank of the River Ouse close to the Saxon Church of All Saints. On the opposite bank we could see the Guildhall, rebuilt following WW II damage. Beneath it there is a water gate, where the characteristic cream building stone was brought by river from Tadcaster and delivered to the Minster along Stonegate (the Roman *via praetoria*).

Crossing the Ouse Bridge, Peter pointed out the high flood levels which frequently inundate the riverside properties. He explained that York is situated on a moraine which is cut through by the river at this point. The city lies at a 'nodal point' with access to the sea as well as inland. Sailing barges called Humber Keels were able to reach here from the Humber estuary.

Our leader skillfully navigated us through the edge of the city centre, pausing near the Jorvik Centre on Coppergate ('the street of the cup makers') and observing the regular width (c5m) of the properties indicative of Viking town planning. With a certain amount of glee we were informed that a nearby





*Guided Tour at York*

excavation at Lloyds Bank had produced a large Viking coprolite - analysis indicated worm infestation. Diving through narrow passageways, we passed a 'one up - one down blind-back' cottage which was not as long as the car parked next to it.

Eventually we reached the Hungate ('street of the hounds') dig site located in a loop of the River Foss south-east of the city centre. The dig has been ongoing since 2006 and the site's substantial headquarters has accumulated over 1700 boxes of finds, of which two thirds are animal bones. Excavations on the proposed site of a basement car park have uncovered the remains of Victorian slums, horticultural soils, medieval rubbish, Viking age buildings and Roman burials. The current community archaeology dig is concentrating on finding the site of St John's in the Marsh church; dismantled in 1580 it is one of several 'lost' churches in the area. William the Conqueror dammed the Foss to form a castle moat and a large marshy 'fish pond' - hence the church's name.

The Victorian industrialist Seebohm Rowntree described Hungate as the poorest section of the city and this is confirmed by the present excavations of the foundations of 19th century workers' dwellings which Peter thinks lie above the footprint of the church. Documents such as maps and census returns led to the conclusion that most of the occupants were poor incomers from rural Yorkshire. We could see the outline of a small terrace of 'one up- one down' houses with their communal lavatories. Peter appeared proud of the Duckett's tipper flush toilets that had been found at Hungate - for more information on these and the site in general, visit the excellent website: [www.dighungate.com](http://www.dighungate.com)

Finally we made a brief visit to the DIG exhibition

'Looking Back at Hungate' to see some of the significant finds including a Roman skeleton, Viking ice skates, Saxon boat timbers and also watch videos of the excavation. Thanks were expressed to our guide who had made the trip so worthwhile with his comprehensive knowledge and archaeological experience coupled with his ability to explain the landscape and social context of the sites.

*M.A. Handley*

## **CBA North-West Spring Conference**

The CBA North-West Spring Conference; 'The Mesolithic of North West England: Current Research' was held on the 11th May 2013 in the accessible Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester.

The conference opened with 'The Map is not the Territory' - Andrew Myers giving his thoughts on the Mesolithic of NW England. This included Bayesian statistical modeling of population density estimates during the Mesolithic. He also suggested that although migration was possible across the North Sea at 11000 BP, the Irish Sea was inundated so that Ireland was not colonised until about 7000 BC. This lecture was followed by 'A tale of 27,000 buckets', an account by Paul Clark of excavating a transitional mesolithic site at Stainton West, Carlisle. Apart from the buckets there were also around 6000 microliths and the vast number of finds meant that the team purchased one company's national stock of plastic boxes for storage! Randy Donahue, the final speaker before lunch, described the use of geochemical analysis for identifying the source of black chert. A variety of techniques were used including Neutron Activation Analysis, X-ray Fluorescence and Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry. He was able to identify a north-south divide in the distribution of chert and suggested that hunter-gatherers moved east-west between upland and lowland. He compared the mesolithic hunter-gatherer with the First Nation people of his homeland Canada. They were able to memorise long distance routes and topography using stories and mnemonics.

After lunch a presentation on the Formby Footprints by Alison Burns provided a refreshing approach to the subject and demonstrated her enthusiasm for the archaeology. In addition to the animal footprints, she provided a well illustrated selection of the human footprints revealed on

the coastal erosion surface. The photographs of the casts showed features such as missing toes, claw foot and toe nail drag. Allison demonstrated the difference between male, female and children's prints as well as an uneven gait caused by arthritis. The following lecture by Paul Preston returned to the subject of chert. His research found that although there was a significant number of Mesolithic sites in the Central Pennines, there was no local source of chert and he could find little or no evidence for knapping so concluding that blades were imported. The excavation of a mesolithic village on the Isle of Man was described by Fraser Brown. Because the site was at the extension of the airport runway they had to work at night.

Finally, Ron Cowell gave his thoughts on the Mesolithic structures and artefacts found at Lunt Meadows in Sefton. The site lies at the boundary of the Shirdley Hill Sand in the wetland belt of the west Lancashire plain. Finds included chert tools sourced from North Wales and large stone tools or weights. There are pits with tightly packed stones suggestive of settlement structures. A date of 5800 BC cal had been determined. Ron graphically illustrated the reality of digging in wet weather - after all it was a wetland site!

*M. A. Handley*