



Merseyside Archaeological Society Newsletter 1/2013

Registered Charity No 510831

From the Editor:

Welcome to the MAS Spring Newsletter. Since the last Newsletter we have lost three long-standing members of the Society. They will be sadly missed and short obituaries can be found on page 2.

This issue contains contributions from Dean Paton and Vanessa Oakden together with the usual news items. There is also an update on the current situation regarding the state of archaeology on Merseyside.

Finally, you will note that this Newsletter is significantly shorter than previous issues. The Editor relies on contributions from members to give the Newsletter a more topical appeal. Articles can be on any subject related to archaeology whether it be a visit to a site of archaeological interest, a book review or a museum visit. The visits are not restricted to events organised by MAS. Articles are typically about 500 words in length plus a photograph(s). Hopefully, the Summer issue will contain more members' contributions.

Dave Roberts

Subscription Reminder

Please note that membership fees for 2013 were due on 1st January. Subscriptions should be paid to Joyce as soon as possible.

MAS 2012-13 Lecture programme

Our season of lectures continues this 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.

18th April. AGM & Dr Kate Waddington, Bangor University, *The Whitchurch Project*.

If you have heard a particularly interesting talk please pass the information on to Chris as an idea for a future speaker. C.M.Wood@ljmu.ac.uk

AGM Reminder

Please note that that the 2013 AGM will be held on 18th April at 7.30 at the Quaker Meeting House. Please make every effort to attend. The AGM papers are included with this Newsletter.

Merseyside Archaeological Society on Facebook

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

In the last Newsletter it was reported that the HER remained closed and MAS and individuals were continuing to lobby the 5 local authorities pointing out their obligation to provide an archaeological service for Merseyside. It was also the intention at the time of writing to provide a stock letter for members to send off to their elected council representatives in an effort to widen the protest. In the last 2 months there have been further developments which have delayed this process.

The Merseyside HER has recently been re-opened by NML. However, the current charge for access is £500 per day plus VAT. The responsibility for providing access to the HER under Clause 169 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) rests with the local planning authority. Furthermore, development plans owned and published by each of the 5 local authorities pledge support for the maintenance of the Merseyside HER. It is clear that responsibility for the future of the Merseyside HER and for providing reasonable access to its database rests with the local authorities.

In a recent letter to each of the Council leaders and the departmental planning heads it was pointed out that the local councils had a clear obligation to provide access to an HER and have a proper service in place to ensure that Merseyside's archaeology is properly protected. A reply from Joe Anderson, Mayor of Liverpool, stated that talks between the 5 local authorities, NML and English Heritage were now taking place 'to seek a common agreement to establish a new arrangement for the Record, to ensure that its condition and availability will meet the ongoing responsibilities we share with the adjoining planning authorities'. He also stated that we 'are close to an agreement which appears to be capable of being implemented. This is subject to (the) resolution of some contractual issues which are currently being finalised between the relevant parties but I am optimistic that the matter will be capable of being resolved in (the) relatively near future'.

This sounds like good news and gives cause for cautious optimism. However, MAS Council members will continue to press the local authorities to try and ensure that a positive outcome emerges from these discussions. More next time.

Sad News!

Since the last Newsletter we have learnt of the death of three of our long-standing members. We send our condolences to their families and friends. They will all be sadly missed.

Bill Highcock died in December last year after a short illness. He was 84. Bill was an active member of MAS and during his membership he was also an enthusiastic member of the Society Council, resigning through ill-health only last year. One of Bill's interests was the use of dowsing as a method of detecting underground structures. He was passionate about the subject and time and time again he would defy the sceptics and be proved right by subsequent excavation. In recent years he was also involved in the archeological project at the site of the Stanley Bank Mill in Blackbrook, St Helens. Bill was a busy man and was Chair of St Helens Heritage Network and served on the Committee of the Sankey Canal Restoration Society as well as other local heritage groups. He lived in Crank and served on Rainford Parish Council for more than twenty years. He will be remembered for his boundless enthusiasm and commitment to the subject of archaeology, which he loved deeply.

Jim O'Neil passed away on 22nd December, tragically, the day after he retired as a college lecturer at the age of 60. Although he did not attend many MAS functions in his latter years, he was a member of the Society for twenty years or more. Jim lived in Hoylake and was a keen local historian with an interest in archaeology. One of the many projects that he was involved in was the restoration of the old village pump in Greasby. Always friendly and approachable, Wirral has lost one of its greatest enthusiasts in Jim.

Richard Arthur Benjamin Jarvis came from Norwich to the North West to live in Prescott some 50 plus years ago and for many years taught at Cowley School in St Helens where he was Head of Mathematics and later Assistant Head Teacher. Richard and Margaret, his wife, have been members of the Society for many years and Margaret was saying that on his retirement, Richard, on realising that she was really having more fun from her interest in MAS than he was with his own interests, decided to join her. Their family membership was the start of a long relationship with the Society and, even after Richard's health started to give him problems, they were both regular and loyal attendees at the monthly lecture meetings, the summer field visits and indeed some of the weekend meetings so ably organised by Julia and Neil McLaughlin Cook.

Graveyard Recording at All Saints Church, Childwall

With the hope of warmer weather ahead, graveyard recording at All Saints Church, Childwall will resume after Easter. About 850 monuments have been recorded to date and we hope to complete the documentation of the oldest graves this year. If you are interested in joining this project please contact Dave Roberts. Tel 0151 4272980 email: dbrandpr@blueyonder.co.uk

“Rainford’s Roots: A Community Archaeology Project”

Last time we reported that MAS has been awarded a grant of £75,000 for a new community project known as ‘Rainford’s Roots’. The project will be focused on the village of Rainford near St Helens and will explore the industrial heritage of the village, focusing on its post medieval potting and clay tobacco pipe cottage industries. This project has been set up in collaboration with National Museums Liverpool and many aspects of the project will be supervised and supported by their Field Archaeology Unit. The museum will also be host to a Community Project Officer who will oversee the running of the 21-month project.

We are pleased to announce that Sam Rowe has been appointed as Community Project Officer. The project is still in its initial stages but there has already been a lot of local interest and two successful ‘Drop-in’ days have been held in Rainford to launch the project. There will be opportunities for MAS members to become involved in due course and details will be announced in future Newsletters or visit the website at www.rainfordsroots.com.

Journal of Merseyside Archaeological Society Volume 14

The Society is pleased to announce that Volume 14 is now available. This volume is wholly dedicated to the 2002 excavation carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit at National Museums Liverpool at Big Lea Green Farm, Sutton near St Helens. The Journal is approximately 120 pages in length and not only contains a report on the excavation but also chapters on significant collections of pottery, clay pipes and other artefacts recovered from the site. The authors are Andy Towle and Jeff Speakman with contributions from other professionals.

If you were not a member during 2011 or 2012 and wish to purchase a copy they are available from Julia McLaughlin Cook at £10 each plus postage. e-mail: mclaughlinjulia@yahoo.co.uk

CBA North West Spring Meeting

The CBA North West 2013 Spring meeting and AGM will be held on Saturday 11th May. The meeting is entitled ‘The Mesolithic of North West England: Current Research’. Details of the venue and further information, including a registration form, will be available at http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbanw/CBANW_meetings_intro.html in due course.

Norton Priory Evening Talks - A series of talks on a range of historical and archaeological themes by local experts and researchers.

8 April ‘A Medieval Murder Mystery at Norton Priory’ by Lynn Smith, Senior Keeper

13 May ‘For the salvation of our souls: the Dutton family and Norton Priory’ by Dr Andrew Abram, Lecturer in Medieval History

10 June ‘Cheshire’s Military Contribution in the 14th Century - the Archer’s tale’ by Gary Ashby & Dan Garner, re-enactors

8 July ‘The History of the Norton Priory Georgian Walled Garden - Secrets Revealed’ by Paul Quigley, Ranger

9 Sept ‘Archaeology and Development: The work of the Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service’ by Mark Leah, Development Control Archaeologist

14 Oct ‘Fascinating Folk-lore: The everyday story of country folk, their cures, superstitions and witchcraft beliefs’ by Christine Allison, Historian

Monday evenings 7pm. £3 per person. Places are limited and must be booked in advance. Go to www.nortonpriory.org or telephone 019828 569895

A Healthy Interest in the Past...

With swathes of heritage cuts across Britain taking hold, you'd be forgiven for thinking the death-knoll was beginning to chime for our historic environment. Yet, more people than ever are showing an interest in local history, which invariably offers fun and educational days out that cost very little. The recession has witnessed an increased interest in visiting historic sites and monuments across the UK, but it's not just people's bank balances that are benefitting. Indeed, whilst a heritage trip might save a few pounds from your wallet, it's more likely to lose you a few pounds from your waist-line.

Big Heritage is a Social Enterprise based in Bromborough. The company was founded as a way of engaging people from non-traditional backgrounds with archaeology and heritage, and to harness the power of the past to tackle 21st-century problems, one of which is lack of exercise and obesity. Over the course of 2013, Big Heritage will be helping 45 men (aged 55+) deemed to be at higher risk of physical and mental health issues in exploring the landscape archaeology of Wirral. The project will include training in map regression, walk-over surveys, basic earthwork surveying techniques and field walking – all of which offer gentle introductions into exercise, and will leave participants with a set of skills that they can use independently once the project is complete.

NHS Wirral has provided direct funding for the project from its Public Health Innovation Fund, and hopes that the project will act as a springboard to engaging more people in the recently published "Five Ways to Wellbeing" which the NHS recognise as important factors in living a healthy lifestyle. The project will be running in Wirral, a place which is bristling with unexplored and unrecorded features from the past, from medieval field systems to World War II practise trenches. Target locations for this project include Bromborough, Spital and Arrowe Park.

That great father of English landscape history, W.G. Hoskins remarked that a sturdy pair of boots and a good coat are all that is required to start exploring the nation's rich past – and this is also the first step to getting our nation off its collective backsides and out into the great outdoors.

For more details, visit the History for Health page at www.BigHeritage.co.uk – places are still available for men over 55 but are restricted to specific postcodes. Email info@bigheritage.co.uk to see if you can apply.

Dean Paton



Learn surveying techniques with 'Big Heritage'.

A 9th-century copper pin This cast copper alloy disc-headed pin was recently found in the parish of Formby and was reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. The object has a flat circular head which measures 16.43mm in width and is 1.50mm thick. The outer face of the disc is decorated with five punched ring-and-dot motifs surrounding a central ring-and-dot. The dots have an internal diameter of 1.55mm. The rear of the head is undecorated. The shaft is straight and tapers to a rounded point which appears to be complete. The object has a light to mid green rough patina and is corroded. A similar example can be found in Mills (2001), p58, AS128 and has been dated from the late 8th to early 9th century.



These types of pins date to the 9th century; the plate headed types are late in the sequence being most common after the Viking conquest of Yorkshire in AD867, Haldenby, FRG datasheet 44.

Currently this is the only Early Medieval pin recorded from the Merseyside area. You can view the complete record at www.finds.org.uk/database as [LVPL-A6C291](http://www.finds.org.uk/database).

Mills, N., 2001. [Saxon and Viking Artefacts](#), Witham .

Vanessa Oakden, *Finds Liaison Officer, Cheshire, Greater Manchester & Merseyside.*