



# Merseyside Archaeological Society Newsletter 1/2016

Registered Charity No 510831

## 2016 Subscriptions

MAS Subscriptions for the new year were due on 1st January. Please note all subscriptions for 2016 must be received before the AGM on 22nd April otherwise you will cease to be a member. There is now an option to pay direct via standing order or electronic transfer from your bank.

## MAS Conference

MAS is hosting a weekend Conference on 8th/9th October. Please see page 2 of this Newsletter for further information.

## Lectures - Spring 2016

Our lectures are held at the Quaker Meeting House, School Lane in the City centre. Tea and coffee is available from 7.00 p.m. and lectures start at 7.30.

**April 21st 2016** - AGM followed by a presentation on 'The Archaeological Survey and Proposals for Hilbre Island' by Roy Forshaw and Rob Philpott covering the recording of the topography and how it relates to the islands history / archaeology. It will show plans and drawings from the Maritime Museum Archive which mostly relate to 18th Century buildings which can be illustrated using 3D photogrammetry models and ground survey work.

## Fieldtrips - Summer 2016

The Summer fieldtrips are being arranged. Details will be sent out in due course.

## MAS Weekend - Llyn Peninsula

Saturday 16th July and Sunday 17th July

Meet at 10.00 am on Saturday in Aberdaron at the Thatched Coffee Shop and Bakery. There is a National Trust Car Park in the village; from there we will car share in the area around Rhiw. The main visit will be to the Meillionydd dig (<http://meillionydd.bangor.ac.uk/>) followed by visits to the site of Mynydd Rhiw Neolithic axe factory, Plas yn Rhiw (National Trust, Cafe) and other archaeological features depending on time and weather. On Sunday we will be visiting sites in the Nefyn area.

If you plan to stay overnight, you are advised to book accommodation asap. There are hotels in Aberdaron but they are usually extremely busy at the weekend. Other hotels, cottages, B & B's and camp sites are within a few miles at Nefyn, Abersoch and Pwllheli. An itinerary is in preparation and will be available from [mahandley@tesco.net](mailto:mahandley@tesco.net)

Meanwhile let me know if you intend to come and if you will need a lift or can offer one.

Maurice Handley (0151 426 8157)

## 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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## **William (Bill) Blinkhorn: 28th September 1925 - 10th February 2016**

Bill Blinkhorn was a long standing member of the Society who served on the Council during the late 1970's and as Membership Secretary during the 1980's. He is remembered as an enthusiastic amateur archaeologist and that enthusiasm passed on to his son Paul who recalled childhood visits with his dad to sites in the north of England and Wales. Their first experience of a site excavation was at a Viking farmstead in northern England. Consequently Bill and his young son joined the newly formed MAS at the beginning of a lifelong interest in archaeology and history.

In 1973 Bill founded the Whiston Historical Society and remained its honorary secretary until recently. He wrote several books on the historical aspects of Whiston and Prescot including the definitive History of Whiston: From the Stone Age to the Plastic Age published in 2004.

Bill was a generous man willing to help others and never lost his sense of humour. He was immensely proud of his son's achievement in the field of television and archaeology but Paul would be the first to admit that his dad played an important role in that.

*Maurice Handley*

## **Save a Date: Past Forward Conference 8th and 9th October**

The Merseyside Archaeological Society celebrates its 40th anniversary this year! This will be marked by a display at the Museum of Liverpool June-August, and a conference on 8th and 9th October. The conference will consider the achievements of the society and the challenges and opportunities it faces going forward into its next decade.

As part of the build-up to the display and the conference we're interested to hear about the memories you have of your involvement with MAS – post your thoughts to the MAS facebook page or tweet with hashtag #MASat40.

### **Rock Art**

On 3rd and 4th June, the University of Liverpool and the Museum of Liverpool will be hosting a two day conference bringing together researchers working within the field of rock art. This year's British Rock Art Group Annual Conference incorporates field visits and conference papers. The first day will be dedicated to a field trip including a guided tour of the prehistory section of the Museum of Liverpool. A selection of papers highlighting recent research in the field will be delivered at the University the following day.

### **Cheshire Hoards**

The 'Roman Treasures of Cheshire' display will be moving from Museum of Liverpool to Congleton Museum in July. The opening on 2nd July will see Romans around the streets of the town, and activities and events. A summer programme of events will follow.

*Liz Stewart*

## **Journal of Merseyside Archaeological Society Volume 15**

The next issue of the Journal is currently with the printer. We are hoping that it will be available for issue in time for the AGM. Anyone who was a paid up member in 2013, 2014 or 2015 is entitled to a free copy.

### **The History of Place Project**

The History of Place project is looking for volunteers with enquiring minds to join their Liverpool based Research and Archive Group. You could help them with a Heritage Lottery Fund funded, ground-breaking national project which will celebrate the lives of deaf & disabled people through history. In Liverpool the group will carry out research into the Royal School for the Blind, record oral histories and identify unique stories to share via a website, films, games and exhibitions at M Shed, Museum of Liverpool and V&A. If you have a bit of spare time and are interested in doing some detective work, please call 01303 259777, email [info@accentuateuk.org](mailto:info@accentuateuk.org) or visit <http://historyof.place> to find out more and register. Volunteers will receive a full induction, ongoing training and support to carry out the role.

*Kerry Massheder-Rigby*

## CBA North West Spring Conference

The CBA North West Spring Conference and AGM will be held on Saturday 7th May at Staining Village Hall near Blackpool. Speakers include Michael Nevell (University of Salford): 'Lytham Hall: New light on an ancient monastic site', Norman Redhead (GMAAS): 'A Tale of Two Cities: Understanding the medieval Archaeology of Manchester & Salford', Dot Boughton (PAS Officer for Lancashire & Cumbria): 'Medieval finds from the Portable Antiquities scheme in the North West', Carolanne King (GMGS): 'The Greater Manchester Graffiti Survey', Sarah Cattell (University of Salford): 'Excavating Halton Castle, Cheshire'.

Further details and a booking form can be found on the CBA NW website: <http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbanw/>

### A note from the Editor

In each issue of this Newsletter I try to include reports on archaeological work, events etc. to make it a more interesting read for the membership. It is always difficult to persuade people to write short articles which may be of interest. The Spring issue has received fewer contributions than normal therefore the Newsletter is much shorter. Anyone can make a contribution as long as the topic is relevant to archaeology. Past subjects have included book reviews, field visits etc. If you are visiting archaeological monuments, excavations etc. over the Summer please take the time to write a short report and take a few photos and submit it to me for the Autumn Newsletter.

For my sins, I am also Editor of the Council for British Archaeology North West Newsletter. The last issue included one of the most interesting articles that I have received in recent years from the 'Greater Manchester Medieval Graffiti Survey'. Apologies to those of you who are also CBANW members but I thought the article was worth reproducing here with some additional photos as it is perhaps something that the MAS Council could consider for the future on Merseyside.

### Greater Manchester Medieval Graffiti Survey (shortened to Greater Manchester Graffiti Survey GMGS)

Inspired by the Norfolk Medieval Graffiti survey set up by Mathew Champion in 2010 our project aims to recruit, train and support a wide range of volunteers and groups to undertake the recording of a diverse range of deliberately made marks within the pre-1700 buildings of the Greater Manchester Area. This range of buildings has been chosen to cover any surviving medieval buildings and the more commonly surviving buildings of the mid-16th to late-17th centuries. The period saw major social and economic upheavals along with profound change in religious beliefs and practices which may be reflected in the graffiti we find.

A large-scale survey project such as the GMGS can only come into being and succeed with the involvement of volunteers. From the beginning one aim of the project has been to bring together different groups within the area including local government, professional organisations, researchers, families and interested societies. In particular we want to make the project open to



*Recording engravings on the lead roof at St Wilfrid's Northenden © Andy Coutts*

volunteers at any stage including the recording, archiving, interpreting and dissemination of information. As a more accessible alternative to traditional fieldwork GMGS can open up archaeology and local heritage to new audiences and help groups and individuals develop new skills.

The original project in Norfolk has 659 surviving medieval churches to explore. By comparison our area, which covers the ten unitary bodies that make up Greater Manchester, has around 400 buildings (including churches) with elements constructed before 1700. For this reason while there is an initial focus on churches we aim to consider all buildings of the period in our area. Though the GMGS is hoping to identify medieval graffiti the nature of the building stock in the region means we will be encountering mainly Reformation/early modern material. It is not just graffiti that we are looking at but the full range of marks that might be found including carpenters' marks, masons' marks, Baltic timber marks and burn marks along with other apotropaic (protective) marks. The importance of recording burn marks is underlined by recent research by John Dean and Nick Hill 2014 which suggests that many burn marks are deliberate, probably done as a form of protection, but they are seldom, if ever, recorded. The aim of recording such a broad range of marks is to expand the typology being developed by the Norfolk project and enable a regional picture to be constructed.



*Compass drawn symbol with other graffiti at St Wilfrid's Northenden © Margaret Wells*

The marks in buildings represent different aspects of the lives of the people who built and occupied them and are a means of understanding how they related to the buildings in which they lived and worked. Marks are made for a variety of reasons all of which add to the story of the buildings and their occupants. It is important that those recording and interpreting a building understand the range of marks they may find and do not misinterpret marks made as part of the construction process for other more personal marks. The best way of doing this is to have a good reference record with many different examples. A regional record will provide a sound base for analysis and interpretation. The aim is for the images and data collected to be added directly to the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record. A catalogue, original record sheets and image archive will be kept by the project and eventually it is hoped to add the data to the national graffiti database being developed by other projects.

GMGS is currently at the planning and development stage. As a part of this we are working with Greg Forester the recently retired Rector of St Wilfrid's Northenden and the South Manchester Archaeology Research Team (SMART) to trial our methodologies.

St Wilfrid's Church is typical of the Greater Manchester area. There has probably been a church on the site since before Domesday but the current building was constructed between 1873-6. The later medieval building that was in a very poor state of repair was demolished in 1873. The Victorian rebuilding came across evidence for at least two probable previous structures. The one element that was not demolished was the late-14th or early-15th century west tower which may have originated in the 13th century. With this amount of demolition and rebuilding we were not expecting to come across marks of any significance. However, the results of the survey surprised

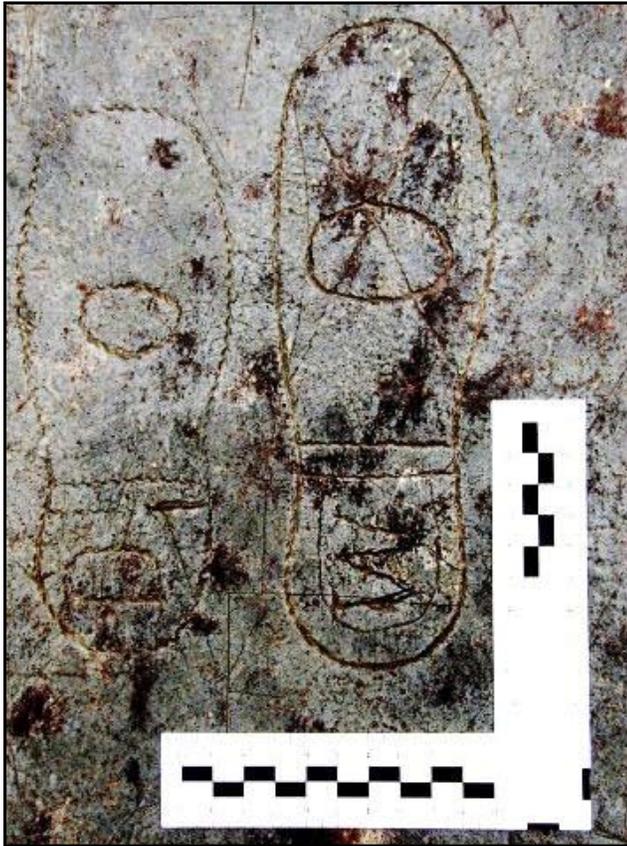
us. The church still contains some medieval architectural fragments retrieved during repairs and rebuilds along with two wooden screens that came from the demolished building. The Victorian nave, aisles, chancel and vestry had no marks of any significance but the tower was a very different case. We found at least three different masons' marks from the medieval period and a compass drawn design that may also be medieval. Alongside these were some protective marks, probably dating to the Reformation, and dates that appear to be from the 1600s. An architectural drawing scratched into plaster almost certainly pre-dates the 1873 demolition while a range of other dates and initials come from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Our most exciting find was a large number of engravings on the lead of the roof of the tower. Engravings on lead roofs are known from other churches, castles and stately homes but apart from recording prior to repairs or replacement there do not seem to be many, if any, in-depth studies undertaken. The engravings at Northenden fit into the pattern seen elsewhere with hand and footprints dominating. These are usually interpreted as being cut by roofers and steeple jacks and the occasional visitor. The sheer numbers of engravings that are being found on old lead roofs suggest that other interpretations might be needed. We have not yet been able to count the number of engravings at Northenden but there are probably well over a hundred separate images.



*A medieval mason's' mark at St Wilfrid's Northenden © Margaret Wells*

The Northenden engravings are primarily footprints with hand prints but there are at least 3 knives and a wheel barrow along with many names, dates and initials. The earliest date on the lead at Northenden is 1774 which is on an official plaque set up by, and naming, the church wardens at the time. It was always thought that the lead was replaced at this date. However, a close look at the engravings shows that some of the lead panels have been lifted and turned. This is indicated by engravings that are cut off at the edge of panels and by at least two major re-alignments at 90 degrees to each other. If some lead was reused in 1774 then there is the potential



*Boot prints with initials at St Wilfrid's Northenden © Andy Coultts*

that some of the engravings could be earlier than that date. The wide range of shoe types visible within the footprints seen in the Northenden engravings might give a means of dating the engravings as sole patterns and shapes changed with the fashions. It is hoped that members of SMART will be able to undertake a detailed survey of the engravings later in the year.

Our preliminary results at Northenden have shown us that even with a building that has had many alterations and major demolition it is still possible for significant graffiti to survive. This is especially true of the lead on roofs which is under considerable threat from the need to repair and increasing thefts. Recording is vital if the full range of marks in and on buildings is to be identified and interpretation of their meaning attempted.

GMGS is at the development stage and we hope to launch in late spring 2016 with a web site and contact details.

*Carolanne King*

#### **A further word from Carolanne...**

'We are not yet set up to run the survey outside the Greater Manchester area but we are hoping eventually to have a North West Medieval and Early Modern Graffiti Survey so if there was anyone in the Merseyside area thinking of setting up a

survey for that area we might be able to help or work in partnership. Our data is going straight to the Greater Manchester HER. Other surveys have built their own data bases but we don't have the expertise to do this (yet).

We will be talking about the preliminary results of the initial trial at the CBA NW conference in May.'