



# News north-west

Twice-yearly newsletter of the CBA north-west regional group

## Council for British Archaeology North West Regional Group

Registered Charity  
No 1081620

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CBA North West publishes two newsletters each year, in the spring and summer/autumn. Contributions are invited from Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside on all aspects of archaeology in the North West. If you wish to contribute information which you feel would be of interest to members of CBA NW, please contact the Hon Secretary. Please note that contributions may have to be edited.

## Roman tombstone found at Lancaster

Excavations at Lancaster by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit last November brought to light several large fragments of the tombstone of a Roman auxiliary cavalryman.

The discovery was made near the line of the Roman road from Lancaster to Walton le Dale; cremation burials had been found nearby in 2001.

The name of the soldier was probably Lucius Nisus Vodvileius or Vodvilltius of the Treveri, a tribe centred on the modern Trier in Germany. He served in the Ala Augusta, possibly a known unit with links to Lancaster and Chesters on Hadrian's Wall. Another stone naming a Treveran who served in the same unit was found at Lancaster in the eighteenth century but is now lost. The recent stone was dedicated by Domitia, probably the wife or daughter of the deceased.

Further information on the stone can be found in *British Archaeology* March–April 2006, page 6. At the time of that publication the developers stated that their intention was to auction the stone in order to recoup the cost of the excavation.



Tombstone of Roman cavalryman found at Lancaster

## CBA North West Spring Meeting and AGM Saturday 6 May 2006

This year's Spring meeting and AGM will be at the Euxton Parish Church Community Centre at Euxton near Chorley. There will be talks on new discoveries and recent work in the region. For more information please see the enclosed programme and booking form.

### New committee members needed

Every year a third of the CBA NW committee have to retire, so we are always looking for new people to help run the Group. Do you think you can help? You do not need an encyclopaedic knowledge of archaeology.

If you or someone you know would like to be nominated for election at this year's AGM, please complete the enclosed nomination form. Or if not this year why not think about next?

## CBA North West autumn meeting 2005

'Distant horizons: maritime & marine influences on the culture of north-west England'

The CBA NW autumn reports meeting took place in the Storey Institute, Lancaster on 15 October 2005. To celebrate *Sea Britain 2005* and the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, the meeting's theme was the region's maritime heritage.

Virginia Dellino-Musgrave of Wessex Archaeology spoke about English Heritage's Historic Seascapes Characterisation project. This follows on from the Historic Landscape Characterisation Project and aims to provide a management tool that can contribute to government agendas. It is being piloted for the inter-tidal shoreline and seabed from Fleetwood to the Dee estuary. Data gathered from existing bodies of information, such as NMRs, historical and geological charts and marine environmental data will be used to generate character maps of varying levels of detail which can be interpreted for archaeological potential, such as submerged historic landscapes.

Dr Ada Pringle, Lancaster University, described an in-depth study of Silverdale salt marsh, on the eastern side of Morecambe Bay, based on personal observation for the period 1964–99 and oral and written sources going back to the mid-nineteenth century. There are indications that the salt marsh has changed size several times during the period of study. Dr Pringle linked periods of erosion and deposition to the changing courses of river channels emptying into the Bay.

The changing channels of Morecambe Bay were also

mentioned by Jack Manning of the Cowp Scar Research Group. In 2000 Mr Manning, a Flookburgh fisherman, found wooden posts from fish-traps and a possible holding tank on a recently uncovered expanse of rocks on the western side of the Cartmel peninsula. There was no local memory of fish traps there and dendrochronology gave a fourteenth-century date. Documentary research suggests that they might have been associated with Cartmel Priory and that they could have been in use until the middle of the seventeenth century.

Vix Hughes of Oxford Archaeology spoke about recent work on Liverpool's old port, carried out as a result of the city-centre development. Excavations at the site of the old Pool, an estuary of the Mersey which runs under the modern city centre, have revealed the eighteenth-century Customs House, while work on the Chavasse Park site has uncovered cellars and street fronts.

Mike Roberts, University of Bangor, talked about pre-historic sea level changes in the Irish Sea from around 18000 BP. By analysing cores drilled in the Menai Straits he surmised that marine conditions fluctuated more than has been supposed. For example, marine conditions were present in the Menai Straits around 13000–14000 BP, which is earlier than the presumed date of 8000 BP, and the coastline was much further inland around 10500 BP than the orthodox date.

George Nash of Gifford noted that 80% of decorated

## CBA North West grants for archaeology

CBA North West is able to provide small grants to members or affiliated groups to assist with archaeological activities in the region. Here we report on how MAD YAC used their money

### Visit to Caer Drewyn (Corwen)

The Mersey and Dee Young Archaeologist's Club (or MAD YAC as it is affectionately known), spent the greater part of 2005 in the Iron Age, and for one meeting abandoned its usual haunt of Norton Priory, instead setting out to terrorise North Wales.

On arrival at Caer Drewyn, we met Fiona Gale, Denbighshire County Archaeologist, who was to be our guide for the time we spent there.

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Neolithic passage graves were near or within sight of, the sea. He proposed that the decorations were part of a repertoire of signs which had widely understood meanings, partly linked to the arrangement of the stones. The fact that some stones were decorated on the back, hidden from sight, suggests that the designs were not just for the living to view.

By dismantling and re-erecting the Calderstones in Liverpool, the narrative flow of their decoration has been lost but it might be possible to deduce it by comparison with other stones still standing at Barclodiad Y Gawres and Bryn Celli Du in Wales. Carvings of similar decorative motifs on natural features in the Bronze Age might be a continuation of the same artistic tradition.

**Julia McLaughlin Cook**  
*Merseyside Archaeological Society*

After a hike to the top of the hill we were confronted by the remnants of a high stone wall which encircled a large compound. Within this were numerous dips in the surface, where round houses used to stand. For some members of the group, particularly the younger, this was their first encounter with an Iron Age site, and for the rest our first encounter with one of such proportions. The site's stone wall (over 600 metres long) is an unusual feature, as many Iron Age settlements are known to have had only wooden palisades and ditches. Was it made of stone to defend against heavy opposition, or was it a prestige feature?

Caer Drewyn is an ideal vantage point, with views for miles around over the surrounding rivers and valleys. Although primarily an Iron Age site, Caer Drewyn may also have a Bronze Age history, shown by the traces of a smaller, earlier and less developed hill fort.

Several excavations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have yielded evidence of the site's purpose as an agricultural / trading settlement and not solely as a fortress. The latter history seems to indicate that it was abandoned during the Roman occupation and then little used afterwards. There is however evidence of a medieval structure, which may have been a farmhouse – the site makes an ideal sheep pen.

The day was very informative, and while spending lunch inside unexplainable hollows in the ruins of the

wall several of us put forward suggestions as to their purpose, all of which involved bearded men with spears complaining about the weather!

This site is worth a visit, particularly if the Iron Age is your thing.

#### Chris Blundell

[*Editorial note:* If you would like to know more about Caer Drewyn, there is a page on the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust website: [www.cpat.org.uk/educate/guides/caerdrew/caerdrew.htm](http://www.cpat.org.uk/educate/guides/caerdrew/caerdrew.htm).

A grant was also given to South Trafford Archaeological Group for publication of their excavations at Timperley Old Hall. We are grateful to them for sending a report, which we hope to print in a later issue].



Aerial view of Caer Drewyn hillfort

#### CBA North-West grants for archaeology

CBA North-West is able to provide grants of up to £100 to members or affiliated groups to assist with archaeological projects in the region.

If you would like to apply for a grant, please write to the Honorary Secretary (address on page 1) detailing the project that you are running or hope to run and describing how the grant will be used. The application will then be considered by the Executive Committee. Successful applicants will be asked to write a report on their project for *Archaeology North West* and/or if appropriate tell CBA North-West members about the project at one of the Spring reports meetings or in this newsletter.

## Community archaeology: or, a community of archaeologists?

After the excellent CBA Members' Weekend in Leicester I was invited to submit an article for the Newsletter. As ours is a community society the subject was a dear one. While the subject was dominated by Peter Liddle's talk about Leicester's archaeology society, the last day's debate really set people thinking. Questions were raised not only about the state of archaeology today and where it is going, but also about archaeologists themselves. This set me thinking about archaeologists; hence the title of this article.

One member raised the spectre of archaeology being controlled mainly by those who are 'male, middle-class and middle-aged'; another of archaeology as dominated by 'grey beards'. Lady members swiftly challenged these perceptions, yet looking around the room there did seem to be a valid point: white, middle-class, male specimens most definitely were in the majority – and I might say ageing at that. Professor Palmer noted that most new Leicester intake was made up of older people changing careers (myself among them). How many of the members present were Asian, Black or other than white British? None.

Obviously archaeology is not just a white British 'sport'. Most countries in the world have museums and teach an awareness of their own histories. Most have indigenous archaeologists. The days of British archaeologists lording over gangs of labourers have long gone.

Archaeology is a popular activity, particularly among the young. Our last dig attracted hundreds of young people keen to get involved. The Young Archaeologist's Club is always well attended. Yet the profession has a kind of 'crusty' image. Why is this? Is it seen as too 'other worldly', too academic? Another member raised the possibility that archaeologists are themselves the problem, in not being open, secretive even. Is it really 'us' versus 'them', where 'they' cannot get a look in unless they obtain a degree, and maybe not even then. Do communities feel this way? Do volunteers, who make up the majority of community groups, feel inferior to those leading the digs or the field walks? Are they, perhaps subconscious-

ly, being made to? Community archaeologists beware.

If we cannot engage the country's young, how can we engage the 'New Britons'. Do minority groups, even though born here, see Britain as foreign and therefore of no historical interest? Is the Government and the national curriculum trying to force British history onto people, thereby alienating them? Are they just too new to Britain? Would many Anglo-Saxon or Norman children have been interested in the preceding history of their new homeland?

And yet, there is no reason why non-white people should not enjoy British archaeology.

Archaeology is a science, yet unlike most sciences it actively engages people. It is a discipline, yet also a pleasure. Most people think it is about treasure first, then artefacts, then the past. It is not and should never have been. Archaeology is about people, for people and by people. More than that, it is Fun!

#### Peter Lange

Moston & District  
Archaeology and Social  
History Society

[*Editorial note:* Members may wish also to read the article 'Roman Wall: Barrier or Bond?' in the July 2004 issue (no 77) of *British Archaeology*, by Richard Benny, which noted that some of the Roman immigrants to Britain were African. Richard recently completed his PhD research at Liverpool University and his doctoral thesis was entitled *Black identity and social inclusion through archaeology and heritage*.

## Continuing Education: does your local society have a project?

The role of archaeology in Continuing Education is changing. Archaeology is a very popular TV subject and there is a vast array of information accessible to amateur enthusiasts, as well as professionals, on the World Wide Web. Some local societies and individual members of the public are becoming involved in 'public archaeology' projects. These have sometimes been initiated by people with no expertise in archaeology, but who are interested in and knowledgeable about their own localities.

The future of archaeology in the UK depends on the active engagement of ordinary people with the history and heritage of their own localities. Although professional archaeologists are responsible for managing this heritage, maintaining records and conducting research, they and their institutions frequently depend on local people for information about new finds and the developing status of old structures.

Continuing Education in the University of Liverpool, whose remit extends to Cheshire and south Lancashire as well as Merseyside, offers courses to the public on various aspects of archaeology, including training in excavation techniques, survey methods, and field-walking procedures. These have provided members of archaeological societies, as well as individuals, with valuable practical skills that enable them to participate in local research project.

Local authorities may be keen to support projects originating in local areas and can support these financially. If you know of a project idea

that would benefit from this kind of training, please get in touch with:

**Dr Zosia Archibald**  
Academic Organiser of Continuing Education,  
School of Archaeology,  
Classics, and Egyptology,  
University of Liverpool  
12 Abercromby Square  
Liverpool L69 7WZ  
Tel 0151 794 2441  
Fax 0151 794 2442  
Email  
Z.Archibald@liverpool.ac.uk

### Another archaeology course for Lancashire

East Lancashire Adult Learning run ten-week beginners courses in the Archaeology of Lancashire. The courses are held at libraries and community venues in Lancashire and can be run in response to local requests.

For further information contact:

**Tina Gleaves**  
Tel 01772 799129 or  
**Tracy Driscoll**  
Tel 01282 417723 or  
[www.eastlancsadultlearning.org.uk](http://www.eastlancsadultlearning.org.uk)

### CBA North-West meeting venues

CBA North-West is keen to develop closer links with societies in the region and to find out about their activities and local archaeological sites. We therefore have a policy of inviting societies in the region to host our Spring meetings and AGM. CBA NW would take responsibility for the advertising and booking arrangements of the meeting but would collaborate with the local society in devising a programme for the day. If your society would like to host a future meeting please contact the honorary secretary.

## Obituary

### Mary Higham 1935–2005

We report, with great sadness, the death at the end of November of Mary Higham, one of the best-known figures in local history, archaeology and place-names studies in the north-west. The large numbers of people present for her funeral at Burnley on 2 December provided abundant testimony to the high regard in which she was held throughout Lancashire and far beyond.

Mary grew up in Rossendale. Soon after her marriage to Eric she began training as a teacher at Chorley College, but her passion for history carried her on to an MA and then a PhD. The author of numerous publications, up to her death she was a leading figure in adult education in the north-west and an active supporter of many organisations.

Nobody who knew Mary could ever be in any doubt that she was a woman of notable character. Over the past ten years she fought, with dogged determination, a series of battles with ill health, and though this final illness overcame even her strength, she struggled against it to the very end. Only a week before her leukaemia was diagnosed, she taught a weekend residential course on medieval history.

One of Mary's particular strengths as a teacher was the way in which her subjects came alive, reflecting her own joy in those subjects. She was an outstandingly generous person: no request for assistance or information would be turned down. With students, she was encouraging and patient, genuinely wanting them to succeed. She was, beneath her sometimes formidable exterior, a woman of very great humility, wearing her learning lightly and never forgetting that she might be wrong and others right.

Mary was a Lancashire woman through and through, knowing much of the county in intimate detail. Her own deep satisfaction in discovering rural Lancashire in the company of her husband and son was a subject to which she often returned. Her life was full, rich and varied. Her death is a grievous loss to her county, her profession, her friends and colleagues, and above all to her family. We know how privileged we are to have known her.

#### Alan Crosby

[With the permission of her family, this is an edited version of the eulogy which was given at Mary's funeral]

A second-hand but serviceable display stand is available to be donated to any local society that can use it. It comprises 8 panels (2 high x 4 wide) forming a display stand approx 7 feet high by 8 feet wide. The stand needs to be positioned with its outer panels angled for stability.

It folds away into a carry bag 3.5 feet x 2.5 feet x 1 foot, so the issue of storage should be considered.

If your Society is interested, please contact Carolyne Kershaw:

[carolyne.Kershaw@virgin.net](mailto:carolyne.Kershaw@virgin.net)  
Tel 0151 280 2669 (evenings and weekends)