



News north-west

Twice-yearly newsletter of the CBA North-West regional group

**Council for British
Archaeology North West
Regional Group**

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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.

CBA North-West Spring Reports Meeting 2005 at Chester

Over one hundred members of CBA NW and friends were guests of the Chester Archaeological Society at Eccleston village hall on Saturday 14 May. For the last three summers the Society has been carrying out investigations at Heronbridge, 2 km south of Chester city centre, and the theme of the day was 'Heronbridge: from Romans to Roundheads'. The group's AGM took place during the course of the day.

In the morning sessions David Mason, the excavation director, described the site and the excavations. The only visible monument at Heronbridge is a linear earthwork close to the west bank of the River Dee and Eaton Road, which follows the line of the Roman road between Chester and Whitchurch. However, between 1929 and 1931 members of the Society excavated the remains of several masonry buildings and discovered some male skeletons who appeared to have died violently. In further investigations from 1946 to 1967 they found that settlement extended 500–600 m along Eaton Road. They proposed that a dock had existed at the site and that Heronbridge was a separate civilian settlement from the Chester *canabae*.

The Society undertook excavations in 2002 to answer questions raised by the previous excavations. Be-

tween 2002 and 2004 its members unearthed graves and fragments of carved funerary monuments from the Roman period. The site of the human remains found in the 1930s was re-excavated and more skeletons discovered; C14 analysis of two of these places them in the period AD 530–620. The earthwork was found to be revetted for 100 m with stone from a range of sources. C14 dates from organic ma-

terial suggest that the earthworks fell into disuse in the first half of the eighth century. The ditch in front appears to have been used for flax-retting in the medieval period.

In the ensuing discussion, David Mason suggested that the earthwork could have been a defence erected by the Anglian king Aethelfrith and the skeletons were Anglians killed at the Battle of Chester c AD 613.



Pat Frost leads members of CBA NW around the Heronbridge site

In the afternoon there were three shorter sessions. Averil Downs spoke about the evidence for smelting and smithing. Dan Robinson, Keeper of Archaeology at the Grosvenor Museum, attempted to reconstruct the gravestone reliefs from examples found elsewhere. In the absence of Malin Holst, David Mason read her paper on the palaeopathology of the skeletons. This led to a very lively discussion about methods of inflicting and receiving wounds, ably illustrated by Ian Davies, a member of the Cwmwd Iâl re-enactment group (Welsh warriors of the Viking period, c AD 850–1100).

After lunch David Mason and Pat Frost led delegates along the riverbank to visit the site. As a first-time visitor, I was impressed both by the size of the upstanding earthwork and by the extent of the supposed civilian settlement. The bright sunshine and the lovely setting added to the pleasure of the walk, and I would suggest that a similar walk is included in the programme of future CBA NW meetings.

Julia McLaughlin Cook

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 meeting and AGM. If your society would like to host a future meeting, please contact the Honorary Secretary.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme in Lancashire – new finds

Since taking up the post of Lancashire and Cumbria Finds Liaison Officer I have seen many interesting finds and in this short paper I should like to briefly discuss five of the most recent finds from Lancashire, amongst them a treasure find and a rare Roman vessel.

A member of Kendal & District MD Club found a rare Early Bronze Age flat axe near Carnforth, Lancashire, and reported it to me earlier this year (4). It is a heavy implement, cast from a copper alloy that contained almost 100% copper and is perhaps a little unusual for the Early Bronze Age. However, the shape very much resembles that of a Neolithic stone axe, on which it was modelled. It dates to 2500–2000 BC and was part of the Castledown Roche metalwork tradition, the earliest in Great Britain. The axe is recorded on the PAS database under LAN-CUM-AA5ED7.

The next find, (LAN-CUM-8C75B6) also dates from the Bronze Age, but it is about 1500 years younger than the flat axe and belongs to Late Bronze Age (LBA) Wilburton/Ewart Park metalwork tradition (3). It is a socketed looped axe made from cast copper alloy and was found near Cockerham, Lancashire, with the help of a member from Blackpool & Fylde MD Club. This type of socketed axe is called an ‘Irish bag-shaped axe’ since they were mainly discovered in Irish LBA contexts and has a small, ‘baggy’ shape.

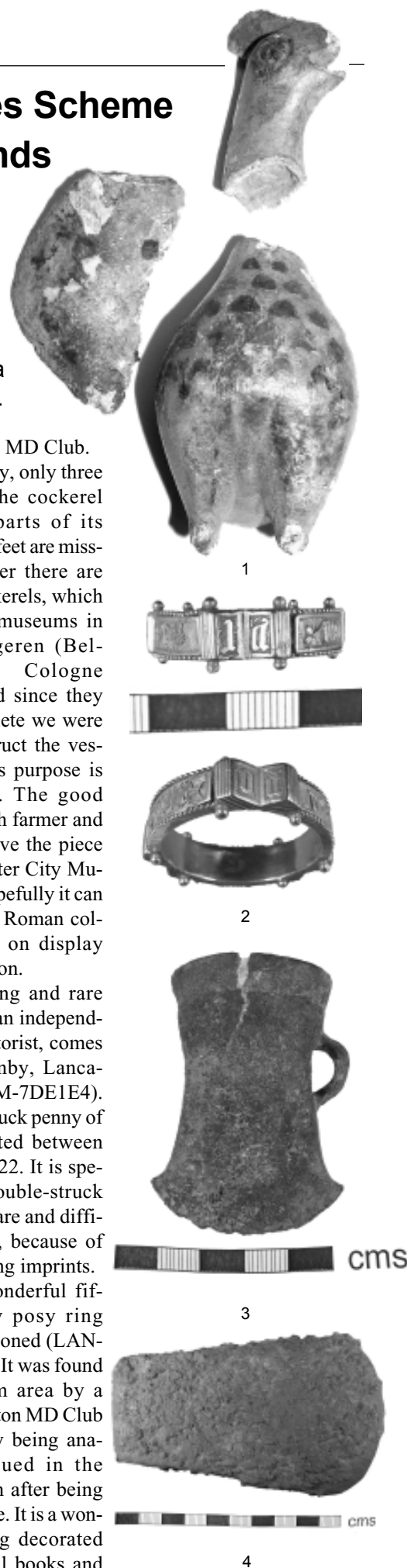
A very special and rare find, (LANCUM-261F75), is that of a Roman copper alloy cockerel with beautiful inlaid enamel decoration, discovered by a member of

the Lune Valley MD Club.

Unfortunately, only three fragments of the cockerel were found: parts of its wings, tail and feet are missing (1) However there are three other cockerels, which are housed in museums in London, Tongeren (Belgium) and Cologne (Germany), and since they are more complete we were able to reconstruct the vessel, although its purpose is still unknown. The good news is that both farmer and finder would love the piece to go to Lancaster City Museum, where hopefully it can be added to the Roman collection and go on display after conservation.

An interesting and rare coin, found by an independent metal detectorist, comes from near Hornby, Lancashire (LANCUM-7DE1E4). It is a double-struck penny of Henry III, minted between 1217/18 and 1222. It is special because double-struck coins are very rare and difficult to identify, because of the two overlying imprints.

Lastly, a wonderful fifteenth-century posy ring should be mentioned (LANCUM-469077). It was found in the Kirkham area by a member of Preston MD Club and is currently being analysed and valued in the British Museum after being declared treasure. It is a wonderful gold ring decorated with three small books and



cast in a way that includes three hollow spaces in which beaded panels have been inserted (2). The script reads 'cest mon decir / po yr ec', so it was possibly dedicated ('you are my desire') to someone whose initials were E C.

Dot Bruns, *Finds Liaison Officer (Lancashire and Cumbria)*

Archaeology courses in the North-West

A new academic year is about to begin. Would you like to learn more about archaeology but don't know where to start? Why not try a course?

Courses at a variety of levels are offered by colleges and university continuing education departments in the region. Hopefully some of those listed below may be of interest; if you are not sure whether the course is right for you just ring the enquiry numbers. Whilst some courses lead to certificates you don't always have to take the certificate; you can just attend the modules that interest you. Don't let the idea of certificates and assignments put you off! Absolute beginners are welcome on the majority of courses.

If you know of other courses that we have overlooked, please contact the CBA NW Secretary so that we can update our website information and include them in future newsletters.

Lancaster

Lancaster University's Department of Continuing Education celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2005. The department offers a wide range of courses for adults

throughout the year and in summer schools. The provision of archaeology courses has expanded in recent years to satisfy student demand. Some courses are held on campus, but many more are offered around Lancashire and Cumbria during the daytime, evenings and at weekends as weekly or day courses. Residential courses during the summer focus particularly on the North-West region and its landscape. The courses are led by enthusiastic tutors who are approved by Lancaster University and are experienced in teaching adults.

The Lancaster University part-time Certificate in Archaeology is now in its third year and includes core courses on methods and techniques as well as a choice of more specialised topics concentrating mainly on British archaeology, but also featuring some Middle Eastern and Egyptian material. There is a final practical course focused on excavation and related skills which students take to complete the certificate. No prior experience is needed to register for the certificate: it is open to all.

All archaeology courses are open to all students whether or not they are registered for the certificate, though students taking the certificate are given preference on courses which are oversubscribed.

The brochure 'On Course' is published three times a year by the Department of Continuing Education, Lancaster University.

For further information contact the department at:

Ash House,
Lancaster LA1 4YT.
Tel: 01524 592623.

The curriculum co-ordinator is Dr Sam Riches. Tel: 01524 593994.

Liverpool

Continuing Education in the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Liverpool run a range of courses in archaeology and ancient languages, including Practical Archaeology (surveying, environmental, fieldwalking), Near Eastern Archaeology, Egyptology, Ancient History and an Introduction to Archaeology. Students taking these courses can gain credits towards the Certificate HE (Archaeological Studies). The Diploma (Archaeological Studies) is offered to students who have gained the Certificate HE and have pursued a further course of instruction and completed a dissertation.

Courses may be offered during the day or evening; most are based in Liverpool but some are provided in Chester, Wirral and the Merseyside/South Lancashire areas.

For further information contact: Barbara Hornby. Tel : 0151 794 2536 or visit the CE website: www.liv.ac.uk/conted/.

For the annual brochure of courses contact:

Continuing Education,
The University of Liverpool,
126 Mount Pleasant,
Liverpool L69 3GR.
Tel: 0151 794 6900; email:
conted@liverpool.ac.uk

Manchester

The Manchester University Centre of Continuing Education offers courses in a wide range of archaeological topics. Some are evening classes but more are ten-week daytime courses, with a few held outside Manchester. There are also occasional day schools and a summer term programme of archaeological

cal walks. Students who choose to submit assignments may gain credits towards the Certificate of Continuing Education. The extremely popular Egyptology course can be studied as an evening class or web-based learning equivalent.

For further information contact:

Archaeology programme:
David Riley. Tel: 0161 275 3303; email: david.riley@manchester.ac.uk

Certificate course:
Ann Barlow. Tel: 0161 275 3274; email: ann.barlow@manchester.ac.uk

A brochure, *Courses for the Public*, is produced twice a year by:

Manchester University Centre of Continuing Education,
Oxford Road,
Manchester M13 9PL.
Website: www.man.ac.uk/cce

Wirral

Wirral Metropolitan College, Birkenhead, runs a one-year AS/A Level course in archaeology as well as several history and local history courses. No formal qualifications are required to take the courses.

For further information contact the college enquiry line:

Tel: 0151 551 7777; email: enquiries@wmc.ac.uk

Wirral Metropolitan College
Conway Park Campus,
Europa Boulevard,
Conway Park,
Birkenhead CH41 4NT.
Website: www.wmc.ac.uk/

Chester

West Cheshire College, Handbridge, Chester offers a variety of courses in archaeology, history and related subjects (including medieval Latin).

For further information contact:

pat.tripney@west-cheshire.ac.uk

West Cheshire College,
Handbridge Centre,
Eaton Road,
Handbridge,
Chester CH4 7ER.

Tel: 01244 670600.
Website: www.west-cheshire.ac.uk

Members' Weekend 23—25 September 2005 Leicester

This year's event is being organised by the CBA in association with the East Midlands Regional Group, the University of Leicester and the Leicestershire Archaeological & Historical Society. The cost is £20 for CBA members and includes tours of the county or city.

For further information contact: Peter Olver, CBA, St Mary's House, 66 Bootham, York YO30 7BZ. Tel: 01904 671417; email: admin@britarch.ac.uk

CBA North-West grants

Grants of up to £100 are available to individual and institutional members for archaeological work and activities in the region. This summer grants have been made to two organisations. We helped Mersey and Dee YAC fund a trip for a group of young people to visit Caer Drwyn hillfort near Corwen. Chester Archaeology also asked for help to fund the free NAD activities at Chester Amphitheatre. Nearly two thousand people visited the site and viewed gladiatorial combats and Roman military displays in the amphitheatre arena. Reports on these events will appear in the next newsletter.

For more information about CBA NW grants, please contact [redacted] or [redacted]

New guide explores the Wirral landscape

Why are mature oak trees found in so many Wirral hedges? Where can you find a columbarium (pigeon-house) and why did their use die out around 1800? And which area of land, reclaimed in the 1840s, went on to inspire New York's Central Park?

'Wirral Walks: 100 miles of the best walks in the area' – a new book by a former University of Liverpool Landscape Interpretation student – lists twenty-five routes and describes what you can see along the way.

The author, Anthony Annakin-Smith, explains: 'I've always loved walking for its own sake but have also been curious about the landscape around me. I wanted to write this book not just for the routes it describes, but also to tell something of the story behind the local landscapes. I hope people will get as much from *reading* the walks as from *treading* them.'

Each route has its own clear map and there are numerous photos. 'I'm particularly intrigued by continuity in the landscape' says Anthony, 'and have tried to capture this in some of the photos, for example vast container ships still using the Mersey at the medieval crossing point of Job's Ferry, and horse-riders trotting along a lane by the site of one of Wirral's many nineteenth-century racecourses. One of my favourite photos wasn't taken on the Wirral at all: it's a road sign to a Scandinavian village simply called 'By' – an excellent illustration of the origin of a suffix found in the name of many Wirral

CBA North-West Autumn Meeting Lancaster Saturday 15 October 2005

Our autumn meeting will be held at the Storey Institute in Lancaster. The meeting has a maritime theme to link in with 2005 being 'Year of the Sea' and the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. Please find enclosed a programme and booking form.

places that are believed to have been settled by tenth-century Norsemen.'

Wirral has always been an agricultural area, and much of it is still a green and very pleasant land. 'I've tried to point out lots of signs to Wirral's rural past', says the author. 'There's plenty of ridge and furrow, and examples of various agricultural improvement practices such as marling and lime-making. It's also good to see signs of ancient crafts continuing such as hedge-laying and coppicing.'

As well as looking at historical features the walks also cover points of geological and natural interest, taking in many of Wirral's Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There's also plenty of 'quirky' information such as the sad fate of the world's first scheduled hovercraft service, Wirral's sources of giraffe food and the irony surrounding a local turnpike.

So what is the author's favourite walk in the book?

'I guess my favourite spots are both ancient defended sites – medieval Shotwick Castle and Moely Gaer Iron Age hillfort. But for sheer diversity the walk around Little Neston takes some beating – symbols of Britain's industrial past, extraordinary geology and the wild beauty of the Dee estuary salt marshes make a breathtaking combination'.

'Wirral Walks: 100 miles of the best walks in the area', is available from local bookshops and Amazon.co.uk

'Archaeology of the workers' house in the North-West'

This one-day conference, organised by the CBA NW Industrial Panel, will be held at Dukinfield Town Hall, Tameside on Saturday 19 November 2005. Speakers include Lynne Walker from CBA and a representative from English Heritage. Topics will range from conservation issues and literary and documentary sources to standing building and excavation work.

For further information contact: Mike Nevell or Sue Mitchell. Tel: 0161 275 2314.

Research Framework for Archaeology in the North-West

The final Research Agenda chapter (Industrial and Modern) and the draft Research Strategy for the North West Research Framework is now on line at:

<http://www.liverpool-museums.org.uk/ARF>

Any comments or suggestions regarding these draft texts would be welcome. The deadline is the end of September 2005.

For further information contact: Mark Brennand, County Offices, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4RQ. Email: mark.brennand@cumbriacc.gov.uk