

# The Post Hole

## Issue 2

2008-11-20

The Post Hole is a student run newsletter for all those interested in archaeology. It aims to promote discussion and the flow of ideas in the department of Archaeology for the University of York and the wider archaeological community. If you would like to get involved with the editorial process, writing articles or photography please email: Katie Marsden (<mailto:km531@york.ac.uk>) or Gemma Doherty (<mailto:gjd500@york.ac.uk>).

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# 1 The Portable Antiquities Scheme

Rebecca Morris (<mailto:rm539@york.ac.uk>)

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is an organisation aimed at the recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public. Begun in 1997 the scheme has now grown to cover most of England and Wales. Prior to the implementation of the Scheme many items found by the public were not recorded in any way leading to a vast loss of valuable information and in cases where items were given to museums there provenance was unknown. This caused further issues as the context of finds is every bit as important to the archaeological record as the find itself. How artefacts came to be where they were found, their relationships to other objects in the area and their stratigraphy amongst other factors combine to provide a wealth of information about the past. The aims of the scheme as listed on the PAS website (<http://tinyurl.com/7ox9au>) are as follows:

- To advance knowledge of the history and archaeology of England and Wales by systematically recording archaeological objects found by the public.
- To raise awareness among the public of the educational value of archaeological finds in their context and facilitate research in them.
- To increase opportunities for active public involvement in archaeology and strengthen links between metal-detector users and archaeologists.
- To encourage all those who find archaeological objects to make them available for recording and to promote best practice by finders.
- To define the nature and scope of a Scheme for recording Portable Antiquities in the longer term, to assess the likely costs and to identify resources to enable it to be put into practice.

The primary contributions to the scheme come from private metal detectorists who regularly discover a great number and wide variety of objects which would otherwise remain unrecorded. Members of the public who come across items of interest, composed of both metal and non-metal substances, can also report these objects to the scheme. Finds that legally constitute treasure are dealt with through the Treasure Act of 1996. This however concentrates on precious metals, prehistoric base-metal, and finds associated with them. Non-prehistoric base metal and non-metal finds would not be recognized as treasure and would therefore be unrecorded. PAS exists to fill this gap.

The Scheme funds qualified Finds Liaison Officers (FLO) positioned around the country to whom items can be reported for examination and identification. The FLO also advises finders of the best practice for uncovering finds and the relevant legislation governing the discovery of archaeological artefacts. The type of find along with its function, date, material and location are recorded on a database allowing for further analysis of the information gathered concerning specific areas. This has, in the past, led to the identification of previously unknown archaeological sites. The PAS database is accessible to the public at <http://tinyurl.com/9hfgwn>.

Any non-treasure finds reported and turned over to the Scheme for identification remain the property of the finder or the landowner, dependant on their own agreements, who are subsequently free to deal with the items as they see fit.

The relationship between archaeologists and metal detectorists has always been a somewhat difficult one which has, on occasion, led to clashes between the two groups. The close links which are established between the FLO's and metal detecting societies in their area have been seen as advantageous to this situation however as the Scheme encourages the two groups to work together for a mutually beneficial cause.

There are currently 36 FLO's working with the PAS all of whom are willing to take on volunteers to aid in the identification and recording of finds. For more information about the Portable Antiquities Scheme and how to get involved visit <http://www.finds.org.uk/>.

## 2 Interview with an Archaeologist - Museum Curator Mr Andrew Morrison, Yorkshire Museum

Katie Marsden (<mailto:km531@york.ac.uk>)

1. **What is your job title?** Curator of Archaeology
2. **What are you current projects, museum or personal?** We will be soon embarking on a complete refurbishment of the museum, costing £2 million. We will be setting a third of the museum over to science exhibits, taking the museum back to its original aims and widening the scope of the exhibits to incorporate a wider span of periods, Bronze Age to around the 1600's. We will be closing November next year (2009) and re-opening to the public August 2010.
3. **What first got you interested in Archaeology?** Playing in mud! The older sections in History interested me. As a child we holidayed on a boat; one year an excavation was taking place nearby and I joined in for a day. I was under 16 and it would probably be against every health and safety law now.
4. **How did you get into the Archaeology careers field and your current job?** I got too old and it got too cold to be a field archaeologist! My first job was with English Heritage and a lot of my working career was through chance. I started on the circuit as a field archaeologist then went to Bournemouth University to do a diploma in Field Archaeology. From there I went on to do more digs. Then I went to Durham University to do an undergraduate degree, skipping the first year. I've worked in France, training conscientious objectors in archaeology, and cataloguing medieval buildings for English Heritage. From then I worked in curatorial jobs and have been at the Yorkshire Museum for four years.

5. **What kinds of experiences have got you where you are today?** Flexibility, do as much as you can. Volunteering is always important. Get as much skills in the field as you can and don't take no for an answer!
6. **What are some of the best parts of your job?** I get to play with really cool things. There is such strong archaeology in York and I get to get close to it.
7. **And some of the worst?** I honestly don't think it has any. We've no benefactor and we have to raise our own money and we have to deal with an old building and institution, with a vast quantity of inherited material.
8. **How much do you have to deal with members of the public?** All the time and I love them! Whether its enquiries, talks, tours, it's the only way to know what people want.
9. **What are your thoughts on the state of the museum system? Do you think it is adequate, is there any room for improvement and if so where?** There's always room for improvement. More money is always needed in different ways. Extra resources should go to regional museums as the bigger museums usually get the funding. Work should go to popularising the tiny museums.
10. **How do you see the current Archaeological climate in terms of jobs in this country?** Absolutely terrible in terms of pay scales! The problem is the system is churning out so many undergraduates to few jobs. However its getting better as more opportunities are appearing in the cultural sector where the transferable skills of archaeology come in use; such as the National Trust or the Forestry Commission.
11. **What advice do you have for students wishing to get a job in Archaeology or Heritage Management?** Get as many skills as possible, volunteer and do the extra work yourselves. Your C.V. has to shine as there will be so many other candidates for jobs with the same degree.
12. **What are your experiences of job interviews?** Personally I quite like them. I've never not succeeded which is a strange situation. I've been on the other side of quite a few interviews.
13. **Do you have any interview technique tips?** Do your research, find out about the job and get to grips with what it entails, find out about the panel; their interests, positions etc. Come prepared and be honest and brave. Don't blag, the people interviewing you will probably know more and can tell. The ones who shine in interviews are the ones who answer questions in a relaxed way and include detail.

With thanks to Andrew Morrison, Yorkshire Museum.

### 3 The State of Heritage in Chester

Gavin Smithies (<mailto:gms505@york.ac.uk>)

I am currently reading for a MA in Cultural Heritage Management here at York. However, I am also a History, Heritage and Archaeology graduate and an ex- resident of Chester. My dissertation discussed the issues of heritage conservation in the city from the Victorian period to the present day and as such, some of the issues raised are relevant to the present heritage debate.

One of the major challenges for any conservation policy in Chester is that the city is historically and architecturally a multilayered site, not simply Roman. Around the walls there are areas of deep historical significance but also buildings and sites that have been altered so radically over the years that they contain only a fraction, if any, of their original fabric. The issue of authenticity has therefore become of paramount importance to the interpretation of Chester's heritage. However this has become significantly convoluted by conservation policies that do little more than chase funding in the face of extensive re-development. These strategies have become short term solutions to provide short term financial gain. Nevertheless, since 1945 there have been a plethora of expensive conservation reports, studies and reviews in which many important recommendations for long term conservation strategy in Chester are recurrent but largely forgotten themes.

That said, we must understand that towns and cities can not remain static. Chester cannot become a museum piece. Urban growth is the driving force behind any economy and new opportunities, markets and trends must be tapped into if urban centers are to survive. Chester's Victorian vernacular renaissance is a fine example of a balance being struck between the need for urban re-development and the City's heritage. Since then public funding, the increase of stakeholders through privatisation and the subsequent town planning agendas have meant that the conservation consciousness' which emerged in the 19th century has now been diluted. However it is clear from the various letters and articles in the local press every week, that the local community has a valid opinion about the direction and form that conservation policy should take and has now become the voice of common sense. For example, there is a consensus that the Amphitheatre should be preserved and developed into a world class visitor attraction. Nevertheless to date, all recent work has been backfilled and the future of the site is unsure. The future for Chester Castle is also lamented; all hope for it resting on a tenuous bid to redevelop the site into a hotel. These are just two examples of the appalling waste and neglect to our heritage which is reported and commented on with alarming regularity in the local press. Chester's historic environment is what sets it apart and therefore it must not repeat past mistakes as of those of the 1960's.

Therefore, in my opinion, it is about time the planners listened to the recommendations of their expensive conservation reports and also acknowledged the validity of community participation. Perhaps this would then lead to the implementation of a more long term and sustainable approach by better exploiting the Cities historic legacy rather than replacing it with yet another quick economic fix.

### Some useful links

- For more debate on Heritage in Chester see: <http://tinyurl.com/7jqm1h> (Facebook: Save Chester's Heritage)

- Report on community involvement in archaeology in Chester: <http://tinyurl.com/8pnhbs>
- For history of Chester (Community website) see: <http://tinyurl.com/8bzm9c>
- For archaeology: <http://tinyurl.com/9s2lz2>

## 4 Skipton's Archaeological Gateway to the Dales

**Hillary O. Gould** (<mailto:hog500@york.ac.uk>)

If you are interested in Archaeology, Geology or Social History read on. Outside York by 40 miles is a town called Skipton (or Sheep-town from its Saxon derivation). It is a historic, and not a little odd (at certain times of the year), market town with great attractions: Skipton Castle, Holy Trinity Church and the Leeds-Liverpool Canal (the first Grade I listed structure for Skipton).

Amidst all this lies a small museum in the Town Hall. The hub of all tourist activity (<http://tinyurl.com/9xerzc>), it combines a gallery relating heritage and the arts - rather interesting - and a small but varied Archaeological museum on the first floor, which is absolutely FREE! Exhibited are all the goodies of Skipton's past: from old excavations revealing the prehistory of Skipton's local area, to artefacts dragged from wells, and tools and objects relating to the industrial expansion of Skipton with the Leeds-Liverpool Canal.

The displays give a glimpse as to how local landscapes were formed by agriculture, industry, lead mining and town life. These collated with the period costume display showcase a neat socio-historic theme to digest as you meander round. All this before hogging the computer to look at the photographic collections.

Be prepared though, you are not going to get a quiet meander, unless you have chosen an off peak time, because local schools love this place. The Riddle Solver quiz and the museum's interactive exhibits usually enthrall them.

So, if you are interested in lazily relaxing on a Saturday head there, make it part of a journey to visit Skipton's brewery the Copper Dragon or spend it in Skipton Castle where Civil War Battles erupt at certain times of the year. You are bound to find something. Ah and there is a great little pub in Skipton called the Narrow Boat, it has the best selection of beers!

### Travel Details

- Train Routes & Times: YORK LEEDS SKIPTON  
Cost single fare: £10.35 (around £16 for return) Single journey time: 1hr 1/2  
From Leeds station there is a train to Skipton from platform 4 or 5 which lasts around 45 minutes. Once at Skipton Platform you have a short walk up a small hill past Bizzie Lizzie's (a fish and chippy) into the hub of Skipton. There's a handy map available at <http://tinyurl.com/6snj5v>.

- Skipton Archaeology Museum Opening times October-March: Mon, Wed-Fri 12:00-16:00, Sat 10:00-16:00.

## Events in Skipton

All information provided by Skipton Castle: A Complete Medieval Fortress (<http://tinyurl.com/7v2nc5>) - some may need to be pre-booked.

- 27th & 28th March 2009 An evening of Shakespeare by Dean Taylor Associates. Castle Granary at 7pm. Gates open at 6.30pm.
- 23 -25th May 2009 A recreation of a 15th century medieval campsite during the Wars of the Roses within the castle ground. 10am - 6pm (Sunday 12 noon - 6pm). The Garrison demonstrating arms and armour. The Red Wyvern Society.
- 18th & 19th July 2009 A recreation: Buckingham's Retinue: Life in the 15th century. 10am - 6pm (Sunday 12 noon - 6pm)
- 25th & 26th July 2009 Meet the Governor: Sir John Mallory Governor of Skipton Castle during the English Civil War. Hear about sieges and skirmishes.

## 5 Hints and Tips: Making the Most of Your Christmas Holidays!

**Gemma Doherty** (<mailto:gjd500@york.ac.uk>)

Whatever year you're in, take a break! Make sure you catch up on some sleep, chill with your mates and let your brains relax so you can actually cope with the next term rather than be worn out before you even get back to uni. This is especially true for the first years, enjoy your holidays now. They won't be so relaxing this time next year so enjoy them as much as possible while you can.

### Second Years

The second term in second year is one of the busiest of the degree so try to make sure you organise yourself over the holidays so you can tackle it head on. Three weeks off may not seem like a long time, but you can tackle a surprising amount in those three weeks if you plan your time. (I apologise if I sound like all those study skills lessons you had in sixth form, but it really is vital to be organised!) While you have until week 3 to hand in the fieldwork elements of portfolio one it is really not a good idea to leave it until term time to do it if at all possible. I can tell you from experience it certainly makes the beginning of that term a lot more stressful than it needs be!

### Third Years

Its so important you do have a bit of a break. You won't feel like you have time but next term will be really busy so you need to start full of energy. Firstly

make sure you have very clear notes on where you are with your dissertation and exactly what needs doing. However obvious or simplistic it is now write it down because you won't have much time to work on it over the spring term and you do not want to lose time at the end of term and over easter trying to work out what you are meant to be doing. Make sure you know your deadlines for your assessed seminars before you break up rather than leaving it until next term and then finding out you only have 3 weeks to prepare it all. If you have the time (I know you're really busy with special topics and the exam) talk to your course supervisor to make sure you can do the topic you want to do so you don't waste your time and effort planning something you then need to scrap.

It may seem like I'm telling you to do loads of work over the holidays, but the main key is just make sure you are prepared for next term and then have some sleep. The second term in any year is always far busier than any of the others so make sure you do relax and have fun over the holidays.

## 6 News

**Katie Marsden** (<mailto:km531@york.ac.uk>)

Egyptian archaeologists have discovered a new pyramid in Saqqar, near Cairo under 23 feet (7 meters) of sand. It is thought to be the 4,300 year old tomb of Queen Sesheshet, mother of the Pharaoh Teti who founded the 6th Dynasty. It is thought to be the third satellite pyramid of the tomb of Teti; two others found around 100 years ago and in 1994 were dedicated to the pharaoh's two principle wives Iput I and Khuit respectively. The remains were a 16 foot (5 meter) base and a white limestone casing for the pyramid. It is estimated to have stood at 14 meters tall with a 22 metre square base and walls at a 51 degree angle.

The discovery is part of the sprawling necropolis and burial ground of the capital of Egypt's Old Kingdom, about 12 miles south of Giza used by the rulers of ancient Memphis.

Zahi Hawass, secretary general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) in Egypt said:

*"I always say you never know what the sands of Egypt might hide... You can discover a tomb or a statue, but to discover a pyramid it makes you happy. And a pyramid of a queen-queens have magic."*

A shaft was found to be dug into the funerary chamber, so archaeologists are not expecting to find Sesheshet's mummified remains when they reach the chamber. The excavation is ongoing and the team of archaeologists are still a fortnight away from entering the burial chamber. It is hoped inscriptions will still be inside the tomb for study.<sup>1</sup>

Source: National Geographic Daily News

See also: Archaeology News (<http://tinyurl.com/a2qvoj>).

## 7 York Minster Library - Request for Volunteers

**David Harker** (<mailto:dhh500@york.ac.uk>)



The York Minster Library (<http://tinyurl.com/8mrnxx>) needs your help, if you want to help them out then please drop in and see them! This could be a great experience *and* look good on your CV! I'm sure all help will be greatly appreciated.

