September 2008

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ERAS LOCAL NEWS . .

Thwing Excavation

Prof. Martin Millett reports that with the help of a series of excellent ERAS volunteers, the student training excavation of the Romano-British site at Thwing was completed on target, this summer, with good results. Details will be available in a future ERAS newsletter. He hopes to carry out further survey work on parts of the extensive adjacent ladder settlement.

Apologies

Your editor apologises for typo errors in the last newsletter, including a reference to the *Bonze Age*. It was also pointed out that Liz Chamberlin’s former job title in Hull, had been inflated from ‘Assistant’ to ‘Officer’ much to her embarrassment. Sorry, Liz, I didn’t realise there was a difference. (Ed.) It is always difficult getting the newsletter out on time and usually ends in a last-minute panic, to get it to the repro shop, with time for only minimal proof-reading. In theory, we would have an assistant to proof read the text, and help has indeed been proffered, but there just never seems to be enough time….

(please email this month’s complaints to the address on the back cover!)

Major Study of Samian Pottery Stamps

With the help of donations from a few long-standing members, ERAS is purchasing Volume 1 of a major new study of Samian pottery stamps. This series aims to catalogue all known potters’ stamp marks, alphabetically, by the potter’s name and it is hoped the society will, in the future, be able to continue purchasing further volumes as they are published. They will be kept in the Reference section at Hull University’s Brynmor Jones Library and will be available to researchers, including ERAS members who have applied for their University Library reader’s ticket.

ERAS Lecture Programme 2008-9

Programme organiser Ian Rowlandson has put together a most promising series of lectures for this coming season and will do his utmost to ensure we don’t have any hitches. We seem to have been plagued with last minute illnesses/breakdowns/cancellations recently, although our local lecturers must be congratulated for providing some excellent last minute replacement lectures.

The first meeting - the usual round-up of work in the region promises to be good, with reports from Humber Field Archaeology about their work in the region, from On-Site Archaeology about work at Howden and at Pocklington Airfield and from Ed Dennison (EDAS) about building recording in North Bar Within, Beverley. There will also be an update on the Easington to Ganstead pipeline work. It is always difficult arranging this particular evening, as it might seem to be a little churlish to ask a speaker to come, but to give them only 15 minutes in which to speak. Apart from having a separate whole day meeting, there seems to be no way around this. Please let the committee know what you think about the reports meeting. I know Ian is already working hard on planning the 2009/10 programme, so here’s hoping for a problem-free season.

South Cave Weapons Cache

The fabulous cache of Iron Age weapons found by metal detectors, including ERAS member Mick Carr, is on permanent display at the Treasure House in Beverley. Although the display case is slightly confusing, visually, with rather too many coloured plastic stands, it is certainly worth a visit, as is the rest of the permanent display, also the local research area, downstairs. (If any of you have not managed to visit the Treasure House yet, I can also report that the coffee, buns and facilities there are most excellent.)

Big Flint Event at Arram

Fiona Wilson writes –

Many thanks to all of you who attended the Big Flint Day, despite the fact that it disappointingly turned out to be a *non* flint day! John Lord, who was going to be demonstrating and taking the workshops, had the misfortune of having a major breakdown on his way to Arram. Despite his efforts, he couldn’t get in touch with us until it was too late to cancel, so we went ahead and hoped for the best. Luckily, thanks to Rose Nicholson and Scunthorpe Museum, we had an excellent teaching collection that Ian Rowlandson talked about with much knowledge and enthusiasm, and I’m sure our visitors learnt a great deal about the artefacts on show; many thanks to Ian. The social aspect of the day was also a great success and took the form of a Roman themed barbeque and buffet. Several of the committee members put in a great deal of effort to produce ancient style meat dishes, salads, breads, pastries and desserts; a type of experimental archaeology that resulted in very full stomachs and much praise from our visitors. I found some delicious bread recipes on www.celtinet.org.uk that I shall certainly be trying again! To wash down our feast we had several bottles of wine. Many thanks to Terry Manby for that kind donation.

As far as the flint knapping goes, we do hope to reschedule the event, as I know many of you were disappointed. There was a suggestion that perhaps it could be held at the Southburn Museum, which would be fantastic, as it provides a further opportunity to see the wonderful work that has been done there. As soon as something is confirmed we will let you know, and thank you all once again for your support and understanding.

Newsletter editor
SAM IS OPEN!

After many months of hard work Southburn Archaeological Museum (SAM) was formally opened on 6th July, 2008. Many thanks to all of the SAM and ERAS volunteers whose efforts made this possible. The opening coincided with celebrations to mark 50 years of JSR Farms where the museum is located and over 200 people are estimated to have visited the museum. Comments were very positive and enthusiastic from adults and children alike.

In addition to exhibits showing a continuity from the Neolithic to the 20th century, the museum also features learning activities for young archaeologists including mosaics, games, colouring, clay pot making and sand tray excavations of real Romano-British and Medieval pottery.

The ERAS Field Studies evenings, (first Wednesday each month) have been a great success and have made an important contribution to the success of the museum. We thank everyone for their help and we hope that it has been as interesting and informative for you as it has been helpful for the museum. The group has continued to clean, identify and record pottery, metal and stone artefacts from the original fieldwork and excavations by Brian Hebblewhite. They have also helped in preparing displays and games.

The most recent Field Studies night, attention turned to cleaning the extensive collection of bone which revealed signs of butchery on several bones and a small broken bone pin with a circular hole bored through the top. For the October Field Studies evening it is hoped to have a bone expert to help volunteers to start the identification, classification and recording of this important part of the collection.

There has been a visit from an expert on querns from the Yorkshire Quern Society who provided valuable information on the quern collection. The most interesting development was that a millstone fragment which we had previously thought to be Medieval turned out to be Roman. The millstone would probably have been turned by an animal.

SAM has recently received a grant from the “Awards for All” Heritage Lottery Scheme which will help with our preparations for visits by adult and school parties in the near future. Although visits are by appointment, all are welcome and we will try to accommodate times to suit you. Please ring 01377 271180 or 01377 227755. The Field Studies evenings will continue on the first Wednesday evening of each month through the Autumn and Winter seasons. We hope to see you there!  

Bill Coultard

Where Are They Now?

As editor, I have an incredibly difficult job trying to get information out of all you members. Yes, YOU! If you have news of any old friends or colleagues from ERAS, or of former students on the part-time archaeology courses, please let me know. You need to check with the person first, that it’s OK with them, but that’s a good excuse to email or phone them …

Pam Cartwright – who was on the ERAS committee last year, has been working on various commercial excavations including the current one in the interior of the Beverley Playhouse and the adjacent former swimming baths. Since finishing her part time archaeology degree course, she has worked as a self-employed commercial contract archaeologist, on sites of all periods from Bronze Age onwards – though, she adds, a little ruefully – “there’s an awful lot of Medieval stuff”.

Sue Gibson – After completion of her teaching qualification at Barnsley, Sue has started her first teaching job at a college in Skipton so we wish her well and hope to see her occasionally at ERAS events.

Terry Manby

I can report that Terry is well, but very busy, working away quietly on various long term projects. (In other words, Writing Up – that bugbear of all archaeologists!) Last year he was one of thirty contributors to Colin Burgess’s festchrift ‘Beyond Stonehenge’.

Terry has just completed a report on the Grooved Ware pottery from the commercial development site at Auchinleck Close, Driffield, for West Yorkshire Archaeological Services. He is still working on the completion of his Thwing material, which I know will be much appreciated by so many pre-historians, both locally and in the wider sphere.

Fiona Wilson sends news of Tania –

Those of you who took part in the Arram excavations will probably remember Tania, who came all the way from Spain to join us for the summer of 2006. Tania has been busy digging on a Neolithic site in France this year, but recently returned to her home town for the free wine festival that takes place in the nearby caves every year. We were delighted last year when Tania visited us for a few days, although she had the misfortune of being here when we had the terrible floods, certainly a memorable holiday for her. That didn't seem to have put her off though, as I recently had a message from her to say that she may visiting again soon, hopefully this trip to Hull will be less dramatic!

Kate Dennett
POSSIBLE EVIDENCE FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF ROMANO-BRITISH GLASS BANGLES

The reason for beginning my research and subsequent obsession with Romano-British glass bangles lies with Hull University, for it was whilst doing a project for my Certificate in Archaeology that I found my first piece of Roman glass. Now, here I am some two hundred pieces and five years later, totally absorbed in the production and manufacture of glass bangles.

Field work began at Thearne, East Yorkshire in 2003, with a ten metre gridded field walking survey of the top half of the field centered on TA 06753670. The finds included a mixture of Roman, Medieval and Post Medieval pottery, some animal bone and Victorian glass. One find, which proved unusual, was a small piece of twisted glass cane, later identified as a cord from a Romano-British glass bangle.

The Romano-British pottery was concentrated in the north-west corner of the field, but a subsequent geophysical survey, using the ERAS resistivity meter on this area only revealed the Medieval ridge and furrow system and no other features. What became clear during field walking was that the underlying archaeology was being disturbed by some of the deep cultivation being carried out in the field.

A series of test pits was dug during 2004-2006 which exposed several ditch features, from which it was clear that two distinct phases of occupation had taken place on the site. The earliest phase had late first to second century pottery represented by hand made jars, rusticated ware, vessel glass and bangle fragments. The later phase was represented by Dalesware, Huntcliff, Crambeck and Throlam wares.

The bangle fragments found in these ditch features were two Type 2 pieces, which have the twisted cords applied to the surface. Some Type 2 examples have a single central cord while others can have three, four or five cords. These particular finds had cords made from amber and opaque white glass, whereas they are more usually dark blue and opaque white. A third piece of bangle recovered was a Type 3, with a dark blue glass cap over the usual blue-green glass core. On the surface it had been decorated with an opaque white trail and a yellow dot.

The typology for Romano-British glass bangles was first established by Kilbride-Jones (1938) and then expanded by Stevenson (1956). Further work by Price (1988) showed that the distribution of bangles throughout East Yorkshire was more widespread than originally thought, listing 95 examples from this area.

After expanding the study area and doing more gridded field walking, four more pieces of glass cord were found along with two more pieces of bangle. The cords have direct parallels with the Type 2 bangles and also Class 9 beads (Guido, 1978). Most of the cords are dark blue and opaque white. Three other colour combinations have been found at the site. These are dark blue/opaque white and opaque red, dark blue/opaque white and yellow, and mauve/opaque white. These are unusual colour combinations which do not occur frequently on Type 2 bangles.

In the late summer of 2007 a small sondage was opened up, close to the test pits previously excavated during 2006 and it revealed a continuation of the ditch feature. The fill contained numerous pieces of burnt clay and at the bottom of this ditch were the remains of a broken and disjointed hearth. From the fill of this ditch feature over thirty pieces of vessel glass were found. Significantly, ten of these were blue glass chips (smaller than 2mm). Also, two bangle fragments were found amongst the remains of the hearth.

During the autumn of 2007 the lower two thirds of the field were subsoiled and deep ploughed before planting. After the winter rain had settled the soil back down, the field was systematically walked over the course of six weekends. The finds included six more bangle fragments and twelve more pieces of cord (eight of which are shown on the front cover) also three glass beads, a jet bead and several pieces of waste jet. There was a notable absence of Romano-British pottery, the only pottery found being Medieval and post Medieval, along with Victorian glass. One possible answer might be that the people who were manufacturing could have still been using predominantly handmade vessels at this time (late first century), which might not survive in the plough soil so well. Another explanation could be that this activity was carried out away from the domestic area.

Some of the finds are to be chemically analysed at the University of Hull Chemistry Department and these will be compared with results from other Romano-British glass bangles from the region. Funding for the analysis has been kindly given by ERAS and a report on the findings will be published in a future newsletter. Further illustrations are shown on page 10.

Richard Campbell
This is a summary of a number of excursions we have made over the last year; there is no particular theme, apart from Roman archaeology; of which there is an abundance in the south of France.

We spent a few days in the Drome region, staying at a lovely small town called Grignon. There was no visible archaeology as such, but it does have a chateau, which is worth the short walk up the hill. As a side trip, we went to Vienne, a city on the Rhone, just south of Lyon. It was the capital of the Allobroges tribe and developed from a hill fort, long since disappeared. Caesar camped here when he marched into Gaul to quell the rebellion led by Vercingetorix.

Vienne is a typical ‘working’ French city and has a Jazz festival the first two weeks in July; which you may either wish to avoid, or to attend. The centre is compact and the sites are all within easy walking distance of each other. A very fine temple, of Augustus and Livia, has survived in the centre of the city. It is similar to the Maison Carrée at Nimes, but there is no public access. The theatre is impressive and is built into the hillside. The largest theatre in Gaul, after Autun, it held 13,500 spectators. It is still in use, which is good in some ways, but the large modern stage does detract from its appearance. In my opinion it is not as impressive as the theatre at Orange, and does not have much ‘presence’. An excavation about forty years ago uncovered what was described as a temple of Cybele. A more accurate, but less exciting, reassessment decided that it was either a palace or a large domestic house. It is now a small park incorporating the remains, but is disappointing as it has no interpretive signs and could be just about anything. Vienne has three important museum collections. Despite what the guidebook said, these were closed on Monday so I can’t tell you what they were like. I have to admit that Vienne wasn’t my favourite place, especially given the other wonderful sites in the region.

Another trip took us further up the Rhone, to Lyon, which allowed us to visit St Romain en Gal, a suburb of Vienne. This area was obviously the ‘Kirkella’ of Vienne. Strabo says of the Allobroges: “the most illustrious among them settled in Vienne”. Equivalent to a district of the Roman city, the site covers seven hectares, and virtually all of it has been excavated. Occupied since the end of the 1st century, it was a very wealthy district. The public toilets had marble revetments, fountains and wall frescos. Did they charge, or just make the workers go elsewhere? Many of the houses were huge, the majority being over 1,000 square metres. Some of the gardens have been planted or grassed over, and the water features reconstructed. The purists may not like it, but it makes the site pleasant and also gives a better impression of just how extensive these houses were. Apparently, a high water table gave plentiful water for all these fountains, pools and toilets, as well as for more mundane industrial activities. The site has the usual streets, shops and workshops; the most interesting of these being the dyers and fullers workshops with their processing tanks. Tiberius further developed the district, and had drainage and piped water installed. One street has an impressive central sewer with manhole access.

The museum itself is a light, and well designed, modern building, built on stilts to preserve the archaeology beneath it. The wealth of the district is clearly illustrated by the quality of the wall paintings and mosaics which are preserved. Vienne seems to have been a centre of excellence for mosaics, with over 250 different types having been found on either side of the river. They are very fine and detailed. The museum is very well laid out and does not attempt to cram too much in, or give too much information. The models and reconstructions were good. It is an easy museum for those not particularly interested in archaeology - the chauffeur gave the site top marks! St Romain en Gal is across the river from Vienne and the museum is well signposted from the N7 (Lyon - Marseille). It is closed Mondays and some public holidays. Opening times are 10:00 - 18:00 and admission is about €4.

Lyon is a very personable city, despite its size, and is renowned as a gastronomic centre (which, it had to be said, did help to entice us there). It is a very hilly city, so prepared with sensible shoes. Its Roman name was Lugodunum. The god Lug has his sanctuary here and is said to watch every sunrise from the hills. Naturally, the archaeology is at the top. Either walk up through a nicely wooded park, or be sensible and take public transport. There is a theatre, which is still used for concerts today, and a partially excavated street.

The museum is very large (five floors) and as it is built into the hillside, it has a subterranean feel, and is also a bit gloomy. There are earlier exhibits from the Bronze and Iron Ages, but it mostly houses Gallo-Roman material. There are plenty of statues of deities and some good mosaics. Our favourite mosaic was one entitled ‘the Circus’, a depiction of a chariot race, complete with a collision! The museum is very heavy on stonework and inscriptions - unless you are a devotee they can get a bit tedious. One bit of writing is special, however. This is the Coligny calendar, a bronze tablet which gives a five year
lunar calendar. It is inscribed in the Gallic language, and is the longest inscription in any ancient Celtic language. There are some nice hoards of jewellery. I particularly coveted a gold and emerald necklace and earring set. Another exhibit which caught my eye included some incredibly thin glass vessels, described as wine tumblers. The glass was 1mm thick so its survival is amazing. Were they ever used, or did they just sit in a cupboard to be admired?

The archaeological park is closed on Mondays and some public holidays. Opening times are 10:00 - 18:00 and admission is about €4. While you are at the top of the hill, do not miss the Basilica of Notre-Dame de Fouviere. It is an amazingly over the top edifice. Built between 1872 and 1896 in a style described as ‘eclectic’, it outdoes Las Vegas in bling.

Heading back to the coast; we had a trip to La Turbie, or the ‘Trophy of the Alps’. This is well worth a visit if you are in the Nice - Monaco area. This triumphant monument was erected by Augustus, to commemorate his subjugation of the Alpine tribes, who were getting in his way. It stands in the hills near Monaco, close to the A8 motorway, on the route of the old Via Julia Augusta. It is very impressive, and dominates the village of La Turbie, whose medieval centre surrounds part of the structure. There has been some reconstruction, but it has been done well. The small museum is worth a quick look round. The vistas, as you’d expect, are wonderful, looking over France, Italy and Monaco and giving a great view of Monte Carlo. It is open 10:00 - 13:00 and 14:30 - 17:00, except for Mondays and some public holidays. Entry is €5.

And finally, to Nice. The Vediantii had a hillfort at Cimiez, which coexisted with the Roman settlement of Cemenelum. Until the fourth century AD it was the capital of the Alpes-Maritime province. A number of major excavations have been carried out here and the remains of houses, baths and an amphitheatre are visible. Although not as extensive as some of the other sites that we’ve been to, it is interesting and well worth a visit. We have been there twice, and both times it was almost deserted. The site is not over manicured, and there was a lovely selection of wildflowers around the masonry. The small amphitheatre was likely to have been initially for the military; the First Cohort of the Ligurians were stationed here. It was, like the other public buildings, extended considerably during the third century. There are three large bath complexes, the best naturally reserved for the elite.

The on-site museum is attractive and contains the finds from the excavations. Signs are in French, but there is an English guide for the site. The site is closed on Tuesdays, opening times are 10:00 - 18:00. Entry is €4, although it is free on the first and third Sunday of each month (as are many museums and galleries in Nice). Buses run regularly to Cimiez, now a district of Nice, from the bus station. While you are in the area there are two other places worth visiting. Next door is the Matisse Museum. A short walk away is the Monastere de Cimiez and a large park. There are not many eating places in this area, as it is largely residential, and there is no museum cafe. In summer there is a snack bar in the park.

I have been criticised in the past, for the number of times that I mention food and wine in these forays; so this time I have tried to show restraint. However, I would like to point out that I am not the only one in France with a strong appreciation of wine. Driving in the Vaucluse region, on the 941 around Valreas, we came across Notre-Dame des Vignes, Our Lady of the Vines, on the outskirts of the village of Visan. It is a delightful little chapel, with an ornate, gilded altar. The walls are covered with plaques recording thanks for the grape harvests and vintages over the years. The entrance to the chapel is lined with barrels, and over the door is a sculpture of Our Lady holding a bunch of grapes. It is cared for by two nuns, who live in the grounds, and is open to visitors in the afternoons, during June to October. The French love of food and wine has a sound archaeological basis. The Romans frequently commented on the Gauls’ love of wine and feasting, so when in Gaul … enjoy yourselves!

Lesley Jackson
ELQs & the Future of Lifelong Learning
Geology Courses at the University of Hull

You may have heard that the government wishes to withdraw funding for students who are studying for Equivalent or Lower Qualifications than they already possess (ELQs). This is going to be phased in, but for 2008-9, the University of Hull Centre for Lifelong Learning has decided that this change will not affect the fees charged to students enrolling for ‘Adult Education’ classes which are part of the University Foundation Award Programme (UFA).

There will be a slight increase in fees to cover increased running costs and inflation. However, the Centre for Lifelong Learning has decided that there will have to be a minimum number of students studying for a higher qualification than they already hold (non-ELQs) pre-enrolled on the course, in order for it to run. If you have already taken part in some UFA courses but have not completed a ‘final piece of work’ to obtain your Foundation Award, you are still a ‘non-ELQ’.

So this means that you should try to enroll before the course starts, to ensure that it will indeed run. Many people are accustomed to enrolling on the first night of the course, but this now means you could be disappointed as the course may have been cancelled due to too few students pre-enrolling.

If you have only just found out about a course and it is close to the start date or if it has even started already, do ask, as you may still be able to enroll. For more information, please read the Centre for Lifelong Learning prospectus or telephone on 01482 465666.

Study Skills for Scientists & Forensic Geology
This new course for 2008 is run by the Centre for Lifelong Learning and starts on Monday 29th September (not Tues 30th, as stated in the prospectus). The course combines three courses run for undergraduates and is an introduction to study skills which uses forensic geology as a practical example. It comprises five Monday evenings and two Saturday practical sessions.

The study skills element of the course will pass on some practical suggestions about how to write a scientific report. These skills will be put into practice using the series of lectures about forensic geology normally taught to first and second year undergraduates. This will be followed by some practical forensic geology work, normally carried out by third year undergraduates and will use equipment provided by the university. The practical work is carried out on two Saturdays in small groups and then a report is written using the study skills to interpret and present the results to accepted scientific standards.

The following three courses have been popular for some years and continue to be on offer.

Rocks and Minerals
Here is a chance to study the common rock forming minerals and rock types using the university’s collection. Emphasis will be given to rocks and minerals that can be found locally on the beaches of Holderness. Experienced students will have the opportunity to study rarer minerals and rock types if they wish.


Rocks and Minerals through the Microscope
This course provides an opportunity to discover the world of rocks and minerals as they appear through the polarizing microscope. Students will use equipment not normally available to the amateur and will examine specimens from the university’s collection, to reach a deeper understanding of rocks and minerals.

Ten Wednesday evenings from 7.30 – 9.30 in the Geography Dept., Hull University. Starts Wed. 14 Jan 2009

Collecting Rocks, Minerals and Fossils
Collecting rocks, minerals and fossils is an exciting way to study the history of our world and is a rewarding hobby in itself. This course shows you what to look for, where to look, how to collect safely and responsibly, how to take care of your collection and where you can get help and advice on identification.

Four Wednesday evenings from 7.30 - 9.30 in the Geography Dept. Hull University and three half day field trips at weekends. Starts Wed. 22 April 2009.

Thanks to Mike Horne for the above information. Various archaeology classes are on offer as usual, of course, but an understanding of geology is so basic to the study of archaeology that these classes are to be recommended.

Editor
MAGAZINE LOAN

Due to the difficulty of transporting all the volumes we have available for loan, the committee has agreed that only the most recent ten issues of British Archaeology magazine will be brought to the monthly lectures. A full list of the magazines and their loan status is given below and the list will be available at meetings. If you wish to borrow an older issue, please contact Richard Coates on 01482 860891 (or see me at a meeting) and I will bring it to the next lecture meeting.

Anyone who has had any issues on loan for more than a year is asked to return them so they are available for other members. Always remember to sign loaned magazines out in the record book provided, also to sign returned issues back in, so I can keep track of the collection. I would also be grateful if anybody could supply ERAS with a copy of any of the several missing/unknown issues.

Richard Coates

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Richard Coates
Possible Evidence for the Manufacture of Romano-British Glass Bangles (Cont. from p. 5)

A Type 2 bangle (fragment) with amber and opaque white twisted cord.

A Type 3 bangle (fragment) with blue capping and an opaque white trail. Both the above are from Thearne

Both photographs by Richard Campbell.

The originals are excellent, but here they probably suffer from being photocopied in black and white.

Editor

Thanks to Richard for his work on this - and apologies for spoiling his properly laid out spreadsheet, in order to adapt it to fit the newsletter page. Thanks also to Sue Gibson and Enid Waudby who used to look after the loan collection.

Editor